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Editorial Notes

ON July 15 a Federal Tax of at least 10% will be placed on records, and it may even be as high as 20%. Rumor has it that records will return to their original prices, but inquiries in the trade have brought the assertion that as yet there is no truth in these stories. However, it is logical to assume that records may be increased in price some time in the coming year, and since several newspapers and magazines are of this opinion, it might be well to call this fact to the attention of our readers. The reason is, of course National Defense. Shellac is being requisitioned by the Government, and the aluminum supply already has been cut off. Needles also may become scarcer; it appears that no half-tone needles have been available from certain companies for several weeks. It might be well for music lovers to stock up on records now.

* * *

A friendly discussion between ourselves and an English journalist, on the qualities of the music of our respective countries, has been in progress for some time. Our English friend contends that perhaps writers on music in both countries are not explicit enough for foreign readers. In other words, the English writer does not always convey to American readers in a positive manner the qualities of the music of his own country, and vice versa. Our friend suggests that it would interesting if some of the readers of this magazine would express themselves on this subject, and also if they would state what sort of American music they think most likely to achieve world-wide fame. One immediately thinks of American jazz, but since our friend is interested in a discussion of the relative merits of serious music in America and England, most forms of jazz would not enter into the discussion. We believe that some readers may wish to express themselves on this subject.

* * *

That music plays a dominant part in assisting people to withstand the vicissitudes of the war in England, there can be no question of doubt. As one friend from

(Continued on page 423)

Gramophoniana

3. Cut in Wax — Recollections of Henry Burr

Ulysses Walsh

THERE is little doubt that Henry Burr and Billy Murray, more than any other "popular" performers of a generation ago who made a profession of singing for records, deserve to go down in musical history. From the standpoint of creative powers, Len Spencer probably is the greatest talent the phonograph has sponsored, but as interpreters of popular music Murray and Burr—Comedy and Sentiment—are the indisputable leaders. Their names may not be remembered beyond their generation, but they certainly should be.

And now that Henry Burr is gone, and has left his associate of many years' standing alone, it is with a mixture of pain and pleasure that I pay this tribute to the Canadian tenor, who was, in his way, one of the finest artists of his generation.

Though differing in many ways Murray and Burr were alike in that both were natural singers. Billy cannot remember a time when he was not singing, and Burr was already recognized as something of a child wonder when he was five years old. Murray ran away from home in his early teens, traveled with medicine shows, vaudeville acts and minstrels, and thus never acquired any formal musical training; and to this day, when he is making a markedly successful comeback as a Bluebird recording artist, he can't read a note of music. Burr, on the other hand, acquired an exceptionally complete education in other respects, and, despite the sort of music he sang, was always a "musician's singer".

Few record buyers, perhaps, know that Henry Burr's real name was Harry H. McClaskey, although he made a good many

records under that name and was long recognized, in his true identity, as one of the finest church soloists in New York. He was born at St. Stephen, N. B., Canada, on January 15, 1885, and consequently was only 56 years of age when, still possessing a fine voice, he died on April 6, 1941, in Chicago. The singer had been before the public so long that most of his hearers, I imagine, took him to be much older than he actually was. I know the late Frank Dorian, for nearly 40 years a member of the old Columbia organization, used to argue with me that "Burr must be more than 70. Just look at the length of time he's been singing!"

I have already said that Burr was singing when he was five. A few years later he was "discovered" by the baritone Giuseppe Campanari, then a Metropolitan Opera star and one of the earliest Victor Red Seal singers, while the boy was helping his father sell candy and tobacco. Campanari insisted that the youngster go to New York for musical training, which he did, studying with John D. Meehan and with Miss Ellen Burr, whose last name he adopted when he began to sing for records.

Even before his New York days, however, he had distinguished himself for his singing ability. In 1898, when he was 13, he was a boy soprano with St. John, New Brunswick, military band. A year later his father offered him a fine gold watch if he wouldn't sing a note during the voice changing period. Harry agreed, and Alfr. I McClaskey kept his word about the watch. It was soon afterward that Campanari came along.

While still a student in his teens, Harry McClaskey obtained his first church job, as tenor soloist with the Grace Methodist Episcopal Church of New York. How he came to make records I do not know. It isn't clear whether he approached the recording companies or whether they, recognizing his exceptional gifts, came to him. "Henry Burr" was recording for Victor and Columbia, especially for the latter organization, with which his relationship was always particularly intimate, until he gave up free-lancing late in 1920 to become for the next eight years an exclusive Victor artist.

Soon after his Victor and Columbia records began to appear, Burr also signed with Edison, for whom he made cylinders until 1914 under the name of Irving Gillette — a name he had also used not infrequently when singing for Columbia and some of the minor companies. He was never Gillette on Victor discs, but he did sing for that company, as Harry McClaskey, occasional Gospel hymns and other music of a more serious type than his usual output.

Immediate Recognition

The young tenor readily obtained recognition as one of the finest artists then making records, although I think anyone who listens today to his earliest records must concede that, even making all allowances for crudities of recording technique of the time, his voice before he arrived at maturity was not altogether the fine, perfectly controlled instrument it became later. There is a baritone edge to much of his earlier singing. As he progressed in his craft, the tone became higher and smoother — so much so that, in singing the more sirupy sort of popular love song, it fairly deserved such adjectives as "bland" and "saccharine". I cannot believe so fine a musician as Burr enjoyed singing doggerel sentimentality, but he did it better than anyone else, and it certainly paid handsome financial dividends. A comment sometimes made was that he should be appearing in opera "instead of using that wonderful voice to make trash sound like real music".

Thanks to his church experience, Burr had a facility for singing the old hymns

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Burr's Last Picture

with an effect of the utmost reverence. He was particularly noted for this from the beginning of his association with Columbia, and it was upon reviewing a batch of "sacred records" that the old *Talking Machine News* of London commented in 1904: "We hold Mr. Burr to be one of the foremost recorders of the day. He is without an equal in this type of music." Shortly afterward a writer in the same magazine listed Burr, with the late George Alexander (Clifford Wiley) and John H. Myers, as singers whose world-wide reputations had been entirely through records. "If any one of the three should announce a concert in London, the audience would be composed almost entirely of people who have heard them on records," the anonymous commentator said.

In 1905 Burr made his fellow artists envious with the remarkable success of his Victor and Edison records of *In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree*, one of the greatest ballads ever written—even though there are whispers that the writers, Harry Williams and Egbert Van Alstyne, at first in-

tended it for a burlesque on the sobby sentimental songs of yesteryear and learned only by accident how effective it was when sung seriously. The Victor record sold in millions and stayed in the catalogue for almost 20 years.

Henry Burr's career was now assured. Possessed of a degree of business acumen that would be hard to duplicate in the case of any other of the predominantly happy-go-lucky record-makers of his period, he refused to be tied up with "exclusive contracts", no matter how imposing they might sound, but sang without prejudice for every company that made records. He maintained, however, that he was the first recording artist ever to be given a written contract instead of singing by "rounds" or in catch-as-catch-can studio engagements.

His ability to learn of new opportunities and obtain lucrative engagements was the envy and despair of his associates. Billy Murray once said to me:

"If these were the old record days, you could have started a phonograph company down in your home town (Johnson City, Tennessee) today and by tomorrow Henry Burr would have smelled it out and be down making records. Arthur Collins and Byron Harlan probably would see him taking the train and would swing aboard, too. By the time those three got through making records there wouldn't be any money left for the other talent and you'd probably have gone broke, but they would have cleaned up while the cleaning was good."

Made Scores of Records

In the pioneer days of recording, disc and cylinder makers sprang up like mushrooms and disappeared almost as quickly, but while they were around the indefatigable Mr. Burr was busily engaged in singing for them. From 1903 to 1921 he must have made scores of records almost every month, yet he found time to take long concert tours. His relations with all the companies were cordial, except when he broke off diplomatic relations with Edison in 1914, shortly after the Diamond Discs were introduced, when the aged inventor's organization declined to accede to his terms for a new contract. In con-

sequence, he made (as Gillette) only one solo record and three or four recordings with the Peerless Quartet on Diamond discs.

Mention of the historic old Peerless must result in another jump into the distant past, to 1906 or earlier, when Frank C. Stanley, a truly great basso, made some changes in the old Columbia Quartet, which resulted in Burr's being installed as second tenor. Albert Campbell was first tenor and Arthur Collins, baritone. Campbell, still lively and active as a singer, is the sole survivor of the four today. For some years the group continued to sing for Columbia as the "house" quartet, but it was the Peerless (and, very occasionally, the Invincible Four) on all other records. When Stanley died late in 1910, Burr became the quartet's business manager and director, and obtained John Meyer (now chief designer for Thorley's, fashionable New York florist) as bass in Stanley's stead. In 1917 Frank Croxton, distinguished concert basso, took Collins' place, and Meyer sang baritone in the quartet until late in 1925, when a new Peerless, consisting of Burr; Carl Mathieu, first tenor; Stanley Baughman, baritone; and James Stanley, bass, was formed, and worked together for three years before disbanding.

Record Artists on Tour

It was Burr who organized the Record-Maker Troupe also, which later became known as the Eight Famous Victor Artists, and toured extensively in concert until the record business debacle of the late Twenties. As manager of the ensemble, he gave the music-loving public some of the best light entertainment ever heard anywhere. As a rule, the Eight played the smaller communities and medium-sized cities, but it made a smashing success when it appeared on Broadway during the later years of its existence. Its engagement was in one of the larger movie theaters, where the patrons acclaimed the "in the flesh attraction" so wildly that the film showings were reduced in length every day of the engagement and the troupe was given three or four times as long a time for its act as had been originally allotted.

One of the first Eights was composed of

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Burr, Campbell, Meyer and Collins, as the Peerless Quartet (without Collins, the first three were the Sterling Trio); Collins' long-time associate, Byron Harlan, Billy Murray as comedian and master of ceremonies; Vess Ossman, "The Banjo King," and Teddy Morse, song writer and pianist. Later Fred Van Eps succeeded Ossman as banjoist, and Frank Banta became pianist. Monroe Silver was added as monologist. Still later, the instrumental soloists were Rudy Wiedoeft, saxophonist, and Sammy Herman, xylophonist, and of course in 1925 Mathieu, Baughman and Stanley took the place of the other members of the quartet.

Those were happy, sky-larking days when the Eight was on tour. Burr, for all the sentimentality of the songs he sang, was a man with a keen sense of humor, and in private he could be a great cut-up. The "boys" who survive still go into hysterics at recollections of one of his specialties—an impersonation of a pompous after-dinner speaker afflicted with gas on the stomach. He looked the part especially well, owing to the fact that his hair turned almost snow-white before he was 30, and to his not being particularly tall and weighing well over 200 pounds.

On Tour for Victor

When Victor made the troupe an offer for its exclusive services too good to be turned down, the high point of Burr's popularity was just before him. His records sold in almost incalculable quantities. (Incidentally, it would be fascinating to find out how many companies he sang for during his free-lance days and how many different songs he recorded. Almost certainly, he made, counting his work in ensembles, twice as many records as any other singer who has ever lived.) But then came the period of radio dominance, of electric recording and of whispering "crooners," who fooled a new generation of record buyers into believing they were singing, whereas, in the opinion of such mossbacks as your correspondent, Mr. Crosby and his imitators were, and are, only making uncouth noises.

Sensing the oncoming irresistible vogue of radio, Burr, with his never-failing acumen, began to broadcast as well as to record. The Eight for a year or more were

starred on the highly popular Goodrich Zippers program, and Burr was also in charge of the Cities Service broadcast concert for two and a half years. When Victor failed to renew his contract in 1928 and the Eight disbanded, he did a little free-lance recording, then realizing his great phonograph days were over, obtained an appointment shortly afterward as program director of the Columbia Broadcasting Company.

Life as an executive rather than as an interpretative musician was not altogether to his liking, however, so the tenor with the marvelously sweet and melodious voice sought another field of endeavor. He became a permanent member of the National Barn Dance troupe, which broadcasts every Saturday evening from the Eighth St. Theater in Chicago, on an NBC network. At first his cultured tones and impeccable phrasing seemed rather incongruous on a predominantly hill-billy program, but many thousands of listeners who had bought Burr records by the dozens, scores or hundreds, greeted him joyfully and he became the Barn Dance's greatest feature, with his beautiful renditions of *Silver Threads Among the Gold*, *When You and I Were Young*, *Maggie*, *I'll Take You Home Again*, *Kathleen*, *Love's Old Sweet Song* and other ballads dear to the hearts of the plain people.

On the Radio

The last five years of his life, spent on the Barn Dance program, must have been happy. For relaxation, he organized small troupes which gave performances in theaters near Chicago; he motored, collected fine old clocks, went to movies and baseball games and denounced swing music. Associates say he was seriously worried just before his final illness by the probability that the United States would enter the War, and composed words and music of a Prayer for Peace, which were sung on the first program after his death.

In 1910 Burr married Cecilia Niles, a concert singer, who survives him. They had no children, and I believe none of his several brothers and sisters survive. He was buried Wednesday, last April 9, at Kensico, New York.

Millions of people who knew nothing about music except that they knew what they liked, thought of Billy Murray the comedian and Henry Burr the balladist as their own intimate friends. I saw Burr only once in my life and had no chance to speak with him then, but he has been the object of a lifelong affection such as few other men and women, even those personally well known to me, have ever equaled. My

sorrow at his death is genuine and great, tempered somewhat, to be sure, by the knowledge that his old colleague is even today making some of the best records of his career.

May it be a long, long time before I have occasion to write of Billy Murray in posthumous terms such as those I have chosen in which to speak of his great contemporary, Henry Burr!

A Survey of Cello Concertos

A SURVEY of concerto recordings would not be complete without the inclusion of one or more lists of such works for the cello. This noble instrument has never fully come into its own as a soloist in the concert hall and all too few concertos have been written for it.

The violin has long held precedence over all string instruments. The perfection, the beauty, and the variety of its tone, the almost human qualities of its expressiveness, early gave it a dominant position in the string family. Further, it had a greater carrying power than any of its relatives, and so it became the prima donna of the orchestra. The cello at first was used merely to fill in the bass part in the ensemble. Quite a long time elapsed before its solo possibilities were appreciated. The predecessor of the cello was the viola da gamba, a far less expressive instrument. One of the first composers to show preference for the cello over the gamba was Purcell, and Domenico Gabrielli (1640-90) was the first known composer to write solo works for the cello. Later, Bach and Handel, realizing the importance of this instrument, gave it considerable prominence as a soloist.

Despite the fact that it does not have the tonal variety of the violin, the cello in the hands of a brilliant and versatile player can be a most expressive instrument. When used as a leading voice, particularly in a concerto, it is far more

confiding and companionable than the violin. And once one comes under its spell, it is not likely that one's admiration will diminish as time goes on.

Perhaps my predilection for this instrument is occasioned by my admiration for the baritone voice. It is as a rich-voiced singer that the instrument is best remembered and appreciated. In purely technical passages, virtuoso escapades, the cello is not as effective or as interesting as the violin, since it offers less scope than the latter for displaying skill in bowing. This need not lessen our admiration for the instrument, for it will be found that the cello, despite its limitations or perhaps because of them, remains the most intimate of all instruments, the true confidant of the orchestra.

The influence of Pablo Casals upon the evolution of modern cello playing deserves to be touched upon here. Casals developed greater accuracy of intonation, lightness of touch and greater speed by adapting violin fingerings and violin bowing style to the instrument. Perhaps the most outstanding advantage gained by this new method of playing was that it allowed greater melodic smoothness through the increased facility it permitted in the upper positions of all four strings. Grove tells us that with the advent of Casals in the concert hall a new era in cello playing began, and the cello took up a different position among solo instruments. "His art

was such that the six suites for solo cello of Bach were revived and made to live—those who have had the privilege of hearing them played by him have realized at once not only the beauty there is in these works, and how wonderfully they are written for the instrument, but also what beauty there is in the instrument itself. The importance of Casals' art cannot be adequately gauged. In addition to the suites of Bach he revived the Haydn concerto, the Schumann concerto, the Dvorak concerto (to mention only three important works) . . . Again, what must be attributed to Casals' influence is evident in the interest contemporary composers are taking in the instrument . . . " Casals gives a fine emphasis to melody without undue stress of sentiment, and his changes to plucked notes and other purely technical devices are often completely captivating. His innovations in cello playing are being carried forward by a number of leading players before the public today. Such cellists as Feuermann, Piatigorsky, and Cassado, among others, have added glory to the instrument, and assisted in arousing greater interest in it as a soloist. Perhaps it only remains, as Cobbett states, for the "advent of a cellistic Chopin who will produce beautiful works written with an intimate knowledge of its possibilities as a musical medium".

The list of a major works for cello on records hardly commands the respect that the violin list does. In one book on recorded music the writer seems unable to find any of the cello concertos worthy of recommendation. Fortunately all critics do not see eye to eye. There are plenty of astute musical writers who find good reason to value the few cello concertos that are in the concert repertoire — most of which have found their way to records. For the musical listener who shares with the writer the belief that the concerto form is a continuously delightful and rewarding source of musical entertainment, I would, if it were in my province, make the Tovey book on concertos (Vol. 3 in his *Essays in Musical Analysis*) required reading. Tovey was not only a skillful practicing musician but an imaginative program annotator; his appreciation of music is always stimulating and fertile

even if one disagrees with him. But more often than not, he gives us sound reasons why music that many writers scorn or pass over lightly should be performed. And in so doing, he awakens our interest and sends us out to investigate for ourselves.

There are not more than seven real cello concertos on records. These are by Boccherini, Haydn, Dvorak, Elgar, Lalo, Saint-Saëns and Schumann. Bloch's *Schelomo* and Strauss' *Don Quixote*, as well as Cassado's arrangement of Schubert's *Arpeggione Sonata*, however, deserve to be included in the same category.

Undoubtedly there are other cello concertos which deserve to be heard more often in concert as well as to be recorded. Hindemith has written a concerto, which has been announced for performance in the coming Berkshire Festival. Delius too has a work in this form, which although somewhat prolix in its long introduction, nevertheless has its merits. Villa-Lobos has a cello concerto, which was received with considerable favor at its first performance in Paris in 1928. Kurt Atterburg, the Swedish composer, and Eugen d'Albert both have similar compositions which rank highly among their larger works. Atterburg, a cellist himself, is an undeservedly neglected composer in this hemisphere. The d'Albert concerto, although favorably regarded among cellists, is not an especially original work; it has been played in concert in recent times by Feuermann.

The Frenchman Henri Rabaud has composed a concertino for cello and orchestra, and the German Paul Graener a cello concerto. In their respective countries these compositions have been favorably received. It is conjectural whether the *Symphonie Concertante* for cello and orchestra by Georges Enesco would appeal to American listeners, and the value of the Swedish composer Svendsen's concerto is debatable. The four concertos of David Popper and the two by Anton Rubinstein do not rank among the front-line works, and further they are definitely dated, as is, in some ways, the Tchaikovsky *Variations on a Rococo Theme*. Among Felix Weingartner's major works is a cello concerto (Opus 60), which some European

critics have acclaimed as a worthy contribution to the form. The modern Ernst Toch has a concerto (Opus 35), which would undoubtedly appeal to a certain group of listeners. Other works that might repay investigation are Dohnanyi's *Konzertstück in D, Op. 12*, Ibert's concerto for cello and wind orchestra, Tovey's cello concerto, and Schoenberg's arrangement of a cello concerto by Georg Matthias Monn. And Prokofieff's recently composed cello concerto has been performed in New York with success.

Among the modern composers who have saliently exploited the cello as a solo voice is Ernest Bloch. Perhaps someday this greatest of all Hebraic composers will be inspired to write a cello concerto that will rank with his violin concerto among the great works in its form. In the meantime, we have his *Schelomo* and also his *Voice in the Wilderness*, both of which are as important works for solo cello and orchestra as any existent concerto. We are fortunate to have a fine performance of *Schelomo*, but to date *Voice in the Wilderness* — which some critics contend is a greater composition — has not been recorded.

Let us look over those concertos that are on records. Rather than specifically recommend one or two, it might be well to review them all.

BOCCHERINI: *Concerto in B flat*; Pablo Casals and the London Symphony Orchestra, direction of Sir Landon Ronald. Victor set M-381.

It is the sheer beauty of Casals' playing which makes this work charming. One suspects that the concerto could be advantageously condensed into one movement. I presume it a matter of what mood one is in that determines whether one will enjoy a work of this kind. It fits the mood of mental relaxation, when the spirit is tired, for its songful tunes meander like a pleasant story. This sort of thing goes better on the cello than it would on the violin; the instrument takes on some of the characteristics of the modulated speech of a sympathetic friend whose conversation is pleasant if not highly elevating. Boccherini does not go deep, yet

he has appeal, which is anecdotal rather than formal. He was not second-rate, although he was not one of the 18th-century major-league composers. He simply lacked the ability for ingenious exploitation of his material. Like a lot of his contemporaries, he was gifted melodically, and there are many of us today who are beginning to realize that the melodists of the 18th century are decidedly worth listening to. As W. R. Anderson observed, when this set was issued in England, "to hear Casals pull the anecdotes in such a ripe, manly way is sufficient sport". You may not play this concerto often, but when you do it's ten to one you'll enjoy it.

HAYDN (KRAFT): *Concerto in D major*; Emanuel Feuermann and orchestra, conducted by Malcolm Sargent. Columbia set M-262.

Although this concerto has been identified by Dr. Hans Volkmann as having been written by Haydn's pupil Anton Kraft (1752-1820), it is probably just as well that the public came to know it first as a work by Haydn. For it is a charming work, and when it is played with such manly strength and sentiment as Feuermann brings to his interpretation it becomes a delightful piece of musical entertainment. It seems quite possible that the concerto will continue to be attributed to Haydn, despite Volkmann's scholarly contentions, for Dr. Altmann, who prepared the miniature score for publication, retains Haydn name, at the same time setting forth Volkmann's claims in his preface. Long before Volkmann's discovery the concerto was regarded as not being consistent with Haydn's style of writing. There are, for example, definite Mozartian characteristics in the score, which scholars have found difficult to explain. Further, the original scoring was regarded as primitive, and that which we usually hear today is the work of Gevaert of the Brussels Conservatoire. Technically this concerto has interest, and I believe that not only cellists but music lovers would protest its neglect because its authorship was uncertain and its arrangement somewhat

hybrid. There is enough of the spirit of Haydn in this music — after all, Kraft was a pupil of the master — to warrant its being accepted in an unpatronizing manner whether it is regarded as the work of Anton Kraft or not.

SCHUMANN: *Concerto in A minor, Op. 129*; Gregor Piatigorsky and London Philharmonic Orchestra, direction of John Barbirolli. Victor set M-247.

This is not great music but rather music that is rewarding to a great artist; when it is well played—as it is in the present recording—it deserves to be heard and appreciated by a large audience. It is a mistake to call this work feeble—one suspects a lack of imagination and discernment on the part of those who would dismiss it in this manner. It is so easy to damn an art product and so much harder to put it in its proper place. Undeniably there are evidences of frustration in the handling of the symphonic form, for Schumann was not too happy in this field; but as a vehicle for the artistry of a great performer the work has considerable value. It is Tovey who clinches the argument. He says that in this concerto "the qualities of the violoncello are exactly those of the beloved enthusiastic dreamer whom we know as Schumann; and as a flow of intimate melody the first two movements rank high in his art. The finale too has its point... [here] there is a real analogy between Schumann and Browning. Both are the 'essentially manly' poets of people who innocently wallow in sentiment: and when Schumann is nervous he is apt to develop exactly Browning's habit of digging you in the ribs and illustrating grave realities with some crack-jaw quadruple rhyme. And so we accept Schumann's finale as Browningsque."

SAINT-SAËNS: *Concerto in A minor, Op. 33*; Gregor Piatigorsky and Chicago Symphony Orchestra, direction of Frederick Stock. Columbia set K-182.

This work dates from 1873. The best qualities of its composer are evidenced in many ways in this music; there are polish and perspicuity, adroitness and formal

compactness. The solo instrument is exploited throughout its range in a manner to assure smoothness of tone and effect. The mood is romantic, with reminiscent touches of Mendelssohn and Schumann. The composer made a close study of traditional methods and always showed ingenuity in adapting them to his purposes. We seem to have heard this music before and yet it is new to our ears. It lacks emotional depth and yet it is not without poetic warmth. What the program does for Saint-Saëns in his tone poems, the personality of the performer does for him in his concertos. As the English writer H. C. Colles has said, "Without some element either of personal virtuosity or of picturesque suggestion to guide him Saint-Saëns could not be quite at his ease." And so, though this may prove pleasantly listenable music, one may find that it is the playing of the performer that pleases in the long run rather than the thoughts of the composer.

LALO: *Concerto in D minor*; Maurice Maréchal and orchestra, directed by Philippe Gaubert. Columbia set M-185.

It is a mistake to dismiss this work as uninteresting. While it dates from 1877 and thus quite definitely belongs to the romantic era of the latter part of the 19th century, it is a far more vital work than the Saint-Saëns concerto. There is a greater play of rhythm and tonal coloring in this score. Lalo's themes are more original and many of them are of genuine beauty, but his persistent emphasis on the songfulness of the instrument without other than harmonic interest in the instrumental background does not allow for the most satisfying contrast. There are many piquant effects in this music as well as ingenious twists of rhythm, and one's attention is seldom allowed to lag. Lalo was of Spanish birth and it was he who paved the way for the Spanish influences that are found in some of the later French composers. These influences may be found in the present concerto, though it is not, like the famous *Symphonie Espagnole*, based on Spanish material. Maréchal is a fine artist who does full justice to the music, and the recording, which dates

back to the early thirties, is quite acceptable.

DVORAK: *Concerto in B minor, Op. 104*; Pablo Casals and Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, direction of Georg Szell. Victor set M-458.

Although it is true that one can ignore this work without any very great loss, it is equally true that one can investigate it to considerable advantage. Dvorak was never dull, not even in those works — like the present — in which the academic design often suggests that he was not as comfortable as he would like to be. Written in 1894-95 during the composer's sojourn in New York, this concerto has a close affinity with the so-called *New World Symphony*, for its melodic and harmonic structure, also, testify to Dvorak's study of our Negro and Indian melodies. But here these elements are blended with Slav influences, and this allows for a different type of color than in the symphony. This concerto has attained considerable popularity in the concert hall, and I think there are few today who would not say it was deserving of it. When played by an artist of Casals' stature it is a fruitful musical experience.

ELGAR: *Concerto in E minor, Op. 85*; played by W. H. Squire and Hallé Orchestra, direction of Sir Hamilton Harty. Columbia set M-247.

This was Elgar's last lengthy work. It was written in 1919, after he had retired into the country. The music is of a highly reflective character and not as immediately accessible as his violin concerto, but I have found it more rewarding in the long run. The aim here is toward a musical expression of contemplation and serenity. The influence of the beauties of nature and the countryside, according to W. H. Reed, are reflected here; the composer seems to have returned "to the quiet outlook and peace of mind that pervades so much of his earlier work, notably the *Serenade for Strings, Op. 29* and the beautiful quasi-Welsh subject enshrined in his *Opus 47, the Introduction and Allegro for strings*." Sidney Grew suggests that in this work Elgar "is dwelling upon his life and labor,

making a survey of his experience and achievements, and expressing them in the last refinement of musical art — art of the chamber music order, with for leading voice that most intimate of all instruments, the cello. His ecstasy is perfectly controlled. His famous, indeed notorious, *nobilmente* is now spiritual, not proud, stately, or pompous. Without doubt, Elgar, as man and musician, appears at every point; but all now is purified, in the manner of song, even to the echoes of Elgar the imperialist and to the visions of the man who has made the greatest success of any serious composer known in musical history. The general form of the work is that which rises through a series of short fantasy movements to a large and important finale, and in the finale Elgar makes his last demonstration of his musical genius and his last declaration of the faith he holds." The performance of W. H. Squire and Harty is one of sincere and understanding expression, and although the recording, which dates from the early thirties, leaves something to be desired from a dynamic standpoint, it is nonetheless satisfactory. The new Columbia catalogue no longer lists this work, but several readers have informed me that they were able to procure it, so I include it here, hoping that others will also be able to do so.

* * *

SCHUBERT (arr. Cassado): *Concerto in A minor (Arpeggione Sonata)*; Gaspar Cassado and orchestra conducted by Sir Hamilton Harty. Columbia set M-139.

The instrument called the arpeggione, a combination of guitar and cello, came into being in 1823. In 1824 Schubert wrote a sonata for it. Since the instrument was not a success and soon forgotten, Schubert's work was overlooked for half a century. Cassado's arrangement of this composition into a concerto is not without logic, but the first movement is unnecessarily embellished and extended. The movement lacks rhythmic variety, and the recapitulation of the major material has little strength of character. The arrangement is cleverly contrived, and the instrumentation seems absolutely right; indeed it is rather hard to believe that one is not listening to Schu-

bert's own orchestration. The short slow movement is one of the most beautiful that Schubert wrote, and Cassado has scored it discreetly and effectively. The finale suggests a Hungarian influence; it is a most attractive rondo. Cassado, a pupil of Casals, plays this work with refinement of tone and delicacy of feeling. The recording, which dates from the spring of 1930, lacks sufficient tonal coloring in the orchestral accompaniment, but the solo cello part is satisfactorily reproduced.

One other work for cello and orchestra deserves to be recommended here — the

lovely *Élégie* by Gabriel Fauré, which is expressively played by Jean Bedetti and the Boston Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Koussevitzky on Victor disc 14577. This music is full of resignation and melancholy. For all its evident simplicity, said Mr. Miller in reviewing this work, "the *Élégie* is put together with such craftsmanship that its emotionalism seems to deepen and grow with familiarity". Those who do not seek serenity in music should shun Fauré; he was not a sensationalist but a musical poet of the contemplative order. —P. H. R.

Technical Notes

The Output Stage

Robert S. Lanier

THE reference in the January article to the possibility of improving commercial reproducer quality by redesigning the "output", or power stage, of the amplifier, has aroused the interest of several correspondents, who have written in for further details. One reader finds, for instance, that the tone quality of his outfit is too "round" and "boomy" and lacks definition. He wonders if a change like that indicated will improve the quality of his reproducer.

A more detailed discussion of "output" stage design, along general lines, will clarify this problem and ought to interest those who are dissatisfied with their present reproducers. The reader should bear in mind that the instructions to follow are in the nature of guiding principles only, each actual case requiring the attention of an experienced technician who can handle the specific problems that arise.

The output stage, consisting of one or more vacuum-tubes working together, actually delivers to the loudspeaker the power that is converted into sound. A vacuum-tube amplifier is a cascade arrangement, each stage acting on the following one. The "power" stage is the final one. The preceding stages in the usual phonograph amplifier are concerned with building the *voltage*, as distinguished from the

power, up to the necessary level. The difference between the two aspects of electricity can best be understood through the analogy with water-power, previously used in this column. High voltage, but small power level, corresponds to a very high "head" of water and very light "flow", such as that produced by a high dam over which merely a trickle of water falls. This is the function of the "voltage" stages — to get the head as high as possible with little flow. The power stage, on the other hand, must handle considerable amounts of power at relatively small voltage increase, corresponding to a great volume of water moving over a low dam.

Power stage design is important because a large percentage of amplifier distortion arises in poorly designed power stages. The first requirement of a good design is that it be of generous electrical proportions, that is, it should be more than capable of handling the required amount of power. Every power stage will introduce serious distortion if it is driven beyond its capability. This means that the tubes should be large and of the proper type — more on this later. All power tubes are rated by the manufacturers according to how much they can handle with different cir-

cuit arrangements, and high-quality equipment must be designed to operate well on the safe side of these ratings.

A principal reason for a large margin of "power reserve" is that the dynamics of symphonic music require momentary surges of power far above the average level necessary for good volume. Specifically, this means that although 1 to 3 watts of power into the average loudspeaker produces a loud volume in a large living room, the power stage should be capable of handling on the order of 10 to 15 watts of power, if the full depth and perspective of symphonic music are to be enjoyed.

The general circuit arrangement of power stages is now standardized in the "push-pull" stage using two tubes working together, much in the manner of two men operating a double-ended saw. One pushes while the other pulls. The advantages of this double-tube arrangement are so many that no single-tube output arrangement should be considered for high-quality equipment. Single-tube output is useful in "cigar-box" radios and light portable equipment, but not in the type of installation under discussion here.

The choice of the tubes to be used is one of the principal design considerations. There are three general classes of power tubes available, each class made in different sizes corresponding to different power requirements: triodes, pentodes, and beam-power tubes. Triodes, as the name implies, contain three electrodes within the bulb; pentodes have five electrodes, and beam-power tubes are essentially pentodes with a funnel arrangement that concentrates the electron flow inside the tube into a narrow beam. Representative triode tubes are the 45, the 2A3, and the 6B4G. There are many pentode power tubes in use, some of which are the 6F6, the 6K6, the 41, 42, and the 43. Beam-power types are the 6L6, 6Y6, 6V6, and some others.

The history of the three classes of power tubes will give a good idea of their distinguishing characteristics. The triodes came first — the original vacuum-tube used in radio was a triode — and were considered adequate for a number of years. The desire to get more power out of a tube of given size and cost led to the general use of

pentodes in commercially designed radios. The pentode power tube gives greatly increased power over triodes of corresponding size and cost, and requires less voltage from the preceding stages to do it. Then about 1937 the beam-power tube was developed and became exceedingly popular. It still is standard in the large commercial outfits.

The popularity of the beam-power tube was partly due to its greater efficiency than that of the pentode, but also to its being subject to much less distortion. Pentode power tubes have inherently high distortion, and it required only a few years to demonstrate their unusability in high-quality equipment. They will continue to have a place in applications like the portable radio, where space and available power supply are both severely limited. But no really fine reproducer can be built around a pentode power stage, at least with the tube in its present form. This is especially true if an extended high-frequency range is expected.

The beam-power tube gives very generous amounts of power with low distortion, if used with a circuit refinement called "inverse feedback". Without the feedback circuit, these tubes are subject to appreciable distortion and have the fault of reinforcing very sharply the resonant point of the loudspeaker system. In the early days of the beam-power tube, several manufacturers, among them the makers of an outfit consistently advertised as the most splendid available at any price, used the new tubes without feedback, in order to increase that "round", resonant effect that used to do duty for a "gorgeous tone". This practice had to be toned down considerably, because the loudspeaker was sometimes ripped apart by an especially loud note at the resonant frequency. Nevertheless this practice is still one of the main causes of tubbiness in certain commercial outfits.

With a properly designed feedback circuit the beam-power tubes are very good, so good that they are still used in outfits honestly aimed at high quality. After the demise of the pentode, there developed among amateurs and technicians two schools of thought, each with its arguments

and prejudices: those in favor of the 6L6 (beam-power) and those in favor of the 2A3 (triode). Because the problem is theoretically complex, and because insufficiencies in the other parts of the reproducer masked the relative excellence of the tubes, there was no general agreement on the superiority of the one or the other until quite recently, as far as reproducers for home use were concerned. However, the last year has seen a real trend toward the triode tubes, marking the completion of a curious circle in vacuum-tube design history.

This return to the original type of power tube is being made in spite of the fact that the beam-power tube is more convenient in many ways, gives more "power per dollar", and requires less applied voltage to do it. The reasons are apparently as follows: (1) the "inverse feedback" circuit necessary to make the 6L6 a high-quality tube is very complicated in theory and is difficult to adjust. Unless designed and adjusted by a real expert, it can cause more trouble than it cures. (2) With improving quality in the other components of the reproducer, and especially with FM radio bringing in loudspeaker systems that go up as high as 15,000 cycles per second, the amplifiers are being subjected to a more stringent quality test, and the triode is coming out better. There has always been, theoretically, a slight margin for the triode, and the extension of the high frequency range has made this apparent to the ear.

The present situation can be summarized as follows: in moderate-cost installations, where no attempt is made to go strongly over 8,000 cycles or so, and which use the present commercial records and standard radio as sources, the beam-power tubes will give very good quality, more than adequate to the demand. For installations in which cost is secondary, which are to be used with FM radio and to anticipate future developments in record quality, including loud-speaker systems that go up to 15,000 cycles, the triode is indicated. Both triodes and beam tubes should be operated "Class A," which is a designation of the voltages to be applied to the tube, understood by any competent technician.

A really fine triode output stage has certain other general design requirements

which the interested layman should pass on to the technician who will change his outfit. An "output" transformer of top-notch quality is required. Such transformers are expensive, and many cheaper types that are "just as good" are available, but money is badly saved at this point. If the full 15 watts of a pair of 2A3 tubes are necessary, because of an elaborate loud-speaker system and a large room, the *preceding* stage of the amplifier should also be "double", or push-pull, using voltage triodes like the 6J5 or 76: "low-gain" tubes. The two output triodes should have separately adjustable bias, in order to "balance" them perfectly, and an inexpensive meter built into the chassis so that the point of balance can be determined. Lastly the power supply must be very heavily filtered, that is, filter condensers on the order of twenty to thirty microfarads capacity are necessary to good bass response.

Luckily for the technician, the circuits for accomplishing these things are simple and understood by all who have a basic knowledge of amplifier design. (Your serviceman will "get" the preceding paragraph if you don't). Unluckily for the music lover, such an output stage is quite expensive if properly done, but it is unreservedly recommended to those who want an amplifier of the finest quality at present available. Interested readers who have specific problems they would like to discuss are invited to write to this department.

Swing Music Notes

Enzo Archetti

THERE seems to be little prospect of having Duke Ellington back in the East for some time to come. He and his orchestra are doing too well on the West Coast, where the new musical show featuring the Duke and his band, *Jumping for Joy*, is scheduled to open shortly. The music for this show was written by William Grant Still, the well-known Negro composer. No doubt the Duke had plenty to say about the music, too. We'll be waiting

to hear reports. The show is expected to come East in the Fall.

Until then we'll have Duke's records to console us. There haven't been many lately, but those released are good. *Mr. J. B. Blues* on Victor 27406 is a bit of a problem. A piano and bass duet is not always the easiest kind of music to listen to: it fits only certain moods. It is really caviar—for the Ellington fan only. The other side, *Body and Soul*, presents another kind of problem. This music, also played in duet, depends so much on its orchestration for effect that it sounds rather pointless here. But there is still Ellington's highly individual piano playing and Jimmy Blanton's superb bassing—and those are worth anybody's money.

The Duke has made very few 12-inch records in his career. One that has always held a place in the catalogs is an old Brunswick of *St. Louis Blues* and *Creole Love Call*, with Bing Crosby doing a vocal on the *Blues*. Both are so-called "concert arrangements". This month Columbia re-issues it on 55003.

Very little of William Grant Still's music has gotten onto discs. This month Artie Shaw pays splendid tribute to him by playing a *Blues* from his *Lenox Avenue Suite* and spreading it over two sides of a 12-inch disc (Victor). A fine job it is, too, both as music and as an interpretation.

Harry Lim, the Javanese jazz connoisseur, is back in New York again after an extended stay in Chicago and New Orleans. He does not plan at present to run any jam sessions or sponsor any recordings. But he did bring back with him several masters he made in New Orleans with some first-rate musicians assembled for the occasion. The musicians were George Hartmann, trumpet; Jack Lane (of the famous Lane family, which produced Papa Lane), trombone; Buji, clarinet; Monk Hazel, drums; Slim, piano; and Lloyd Denton, guitar. Four sides were made: *Tin Roof Blues*, *Jazz Me Blues*, *Diga Diga Doo*, and *Muskrat Ramble*. Harry Lim is now negotiating to have the records pressed and issued. Under what label they will appear is not yet known.

Mr. Lim also brought back with him much news of jazz artists in Chicago and New Orleans. Both cities are jumping —

a strange contrast with New York, which is dead, musically speaking, at this time of the year. However, he feels that the condition of the Negro musician in New Orleans is deplorable. One of the musicians he was enthusiastic about was Harry Shields, Larry's brother. He feels that Harry is greater now than his brother ever was and that the time is right to "discover" him.

The Benny Goodman band has been undergoing some more changes. For a while Dave Tough was in again, out again. Nick Fatool sat in for him when he was absent. But now Sidney Catlett is in permanently to attend to the drums. And Mel Powell is now chief piano man with the Goodman outfit.

Teddy Wilson has opened at the Cafe Society Uptown with a partly re-formed band. The most important change is the inclusion of Israel Crosby, the now famous bassist (thanks to his *Blues of Israel* record). Emmett Berry replaced Bill Coleman on trumpet.

The Brunswick label is now the property of Decca, as a result of a sale by Warner Brothers. The sale gives Decca rights to all Brunswick and Vocalion masters made prior to December, 1931, which includes many jazz classics, especially early Ellingtons. Up to now Decca has made no decision about using either the label or the masters. Columbia had been using that label up to several months ago for its semi-popular catalog. There is talk that Decca may use it for its classical catalog.

News from Japan says that jazz and dancing have been prohibited there for some time as unpatriotic. Every effort is made to suppress anything suggesting the United States. The word "fox-trot" is prohibited and American jazz records released there are merely labeled "orchestra" or "light music" to avoid using American band names and American words. In Holland there is no jazz at all because Negro musicians are banned by the German authorities. Records are difficult to get and about the only ones available there are Italian H. M. V.'s, which were never rich in jazz. Dancing is not prohibited in Belgium but the bands must play German music.

Edgar Hayes' band is at the Roseland in New York. His personnel now includes Tommy Lindsey, Bob Williams, and Harvey Davis, trumpets; Billy White and Eustace, altos; Randy Merriday and Lem Johnson, tenors; Claude Bernhart and Milton Robinson, trombones; Jack Jarvis, bass; Arthur Herbert, drums; and Hayes on piano, of course.

Mezz Mesirow, the clarinetist Hugues Panassié worked with during his stay in the States, is under arrest on a narcotic charge. It is said that he is liable to a penitentiary term . . . Don Redman is now making arrangements for Bobby Byrne's orchestra . . . Wingy Manone has formed a new fourteen-piece orchestra . . . Vido Musso left Harry James to join Gene Krupa and then changed his mind and returned to his old place . . . Frankie Newton has a mixed band for an all-summer stay at Green Mansions at Lake George . . . Warner Brothers is making a picture about swing musicians and is calling it *Hot Nocturne* . . . A substitute for aluminum, used as a base for acetate records, is being hunted by manufacturers. Defence demands have taken the available supply. Glass is one substitute that bids fair to be adopted generally.

Overtones

MR. Frederick T. Smith, head of Rimington, Van Wyck of London, recently sent out the following announcement: "The Delius Society will shortly have opportunity of recording the composer's greatest opera — *A Village Romeo and Juliet*. The event depends upon adequate support being assured, for the costs will necessarily be high. When I was informed of the proposal my first thought was one of delight; my second, one of admiration that such an enterprise could even be mooted in these times; and my third — obviously — that we must do something about it. I feel sure that a sufficient number of subscribers will be forthcoming, and I earnestly ask all who are in sympathy with this splendid project to let me hear from them. So soon as fuller de-

tails are available I will send them to all who have written. Naturally there will be no commitment until a definite reservation is made."

Any readers who are interested in owning a recording of one of Delius' greatest scores, and one of the greatest operas in the English language, should communicate with the editor of this publication, who will send all letters to the proper authorities in England.

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Although a number of American recordings heads the lists in England in the past two months, quite a few new English recordings are still being issued. Among them are:

BACH: *Prelude and Fugue in C sharp major*, and *Sleepers, Awake* (arr. Kempff); Wilhelm Kempff. Decca K-958.

BEETHOVEN: *Quartet in G maj.*, Op. 18, No. 2; Budapest String Quartet. H. M. V. DB3631/33.

BEETHOVEN: *Sonata in G major*, Op. 30, No. 3; Ida Haendel (violin) and Newton Wood (piano). Decca K959/60.

BRAHMS: *Trio in A minor*, Op. 114; Reginald Kell (clarinet), Louis Kentner (piano), Anthony Pini (cello). Columbia DX1007/09.

BRAHMS: *Intermezzo*, Op. 117, No. 1 and Op. 119, No. 3; and *Capriccio*, Op. 116, No. 7; Myra Hess. H. M. V. C3226.

CHOPIN: *Barcarole in F sharp*, Op. 60; Benno Moiseivitch. H. M. V. C3229.

DVORAK: *Sextet in A major*, Op. 48; The Menges Sextet. Decca K963/66.

GRIEG: *Norwegian Melodies*, Op. 53; and *The First Meeting*; Boyd Neel String Orch. Decca K957.

GRIEG: *Stambogstrim*, Op. 25, No. 3; *Med en Vandlilje*, Op. 25, No. 4; *Vug O Vove*, Op. 49, No. 2 (disc K-961); *Kjaerlighed*, Op. 15, No. 2; *Jeg Elsker Dig*, Op. 5, No. 3; *Der Skrek en Fugl*, Op. 60, No. 4; *Det Forste Mode*, Op. 21, No. 1 (disc K962); *En Svane*, Op. 25, No. 2; *Elferaaersstormen*, Op. 18, No. 4 (disc M-491); *Foraarsregn*, Op. 49, No. 6; *Med en Primula Veris*, Op. 26, No. 4; *Tak for dit Raad*, Op. 21, No. 4 (disc M-492); Astra Desmond (contralto) and Gerald Moore (piano). Decca.

HAHN: *Si mes vers avaient des ailes*; and FAURE: *Après un rêve*; Maggie Teyte (soprano) and Gerald Moore (piano). H. M. V. DA1777.

HUGHES (arr.): *Down by the Sally Gardens*; and COLERIDGE-TAYLOR: *She Rested By the Broken Brook*; John McCormack. H. M. V. DA1778.

MOZART: *Sonata in D major, K. 576*; Eileen Joyce. Columbia DX1011/12.

PALADILHE: *Psyche*; and DUPARC: *Chanson Triste*; Maggie Teyte and Gerald Moore. H. M. V. DA1779.

SCHUBERT (arr. Forbes): *Arpeggione Sonata*; Watson Forbes (cello) and Myesr Foggin (piano). Decca K955/56.

SCHUMANN: *Phantasiestücke, Op. 73, No. 2*; Reginald Kell (clarinet) and Gerald Moore (piano). H. M. V. C3228.

SVENSON: *Romance, Op. 26*; Carlo Andresen (violin) and Copenhagen Phil. Orch. H. M. V. DB5232.

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: *Silent Noon*; and SOMERVILLE: *Loveliest of Trees*; John McCormack (tenor) and Gerald Moore (piano). H. M. V. DA1776.

VAUGHAN WILLIAM: *Linden Lea*; and *Bright Is the Ring of Words*; George Hancock (baritone). Columbia DB2008.

WAGNER: *Siegfried's Journey to the Rhine*; Weingartner and Paris Conservatory Orch. Columbia LX925.

The obvious coupling for this record, says the Club's secretary, Mr. Seltsam, is one of the best of Tamagno's recordings. It is from *Otello*—the *Ora e per sempre addio*. Thus on one disc the I.R.C.C. is able to offer the creators of the leading male roles of *Otello* (Otello and Iago) when the opera was first presented at La Scala in Milan, Feb. 5, 1887. This record is No. 193, and is priced at \$2.00. Further comment will be made when this department hears it.

Other interesting releases by I. R. C. C., which as yet have not come to hand for review, are:

VERDI: *Don Carlos*—*Per me giunto*; and DONIZETTI: *Elisir d'Amore* — *Come paride*; sung by Antonio Scotti. Disc 190, price \$2.25.

GLUCK: *Paride ed Elena*—*Spiagge amate*; and BELLINI: *Bianca e Fernando*—*Sorgi o Padre*; sung by Claudia Muzio. Disc 192, price \$1.75.

CACCINI: *Amarilli*; and DONAUDY: *O del mio amato ben*; sung by Dinh Gilly. Disc 188, price \$2.25.

ROSSINI: *Semiramide*—*Ab, quel giorno*; sung by Eleanora de Cisneros, and *Semiramide* — *Bel raggio*; sung by Irene Abendroth. Disc 5016, price \$1.75.

From Our Mail Bag

To the Editor:

I am glad that your useful and entertaining magazine recognizes the importance of the issuance of the *Beggar's Opera* album by devoting an article to it. As soon as I learned that Victor had issued these records I went to buy them, for the *Beggar's Opera* has been a favorite of mine for many years. I heard them, however, with rather less pleasure than I had hoped. Mr. Schonberg in his article mentions the thirty songs omitted in this recording, and speaks of the odd transposition of one song from its proper place. But he does not say what, I think, should be said, that this set omits several highly important and beautiful songs. The chief gap, to me, at least, is of Polly's "Virgins are like the fair flower in its lustre." This is perhaps the loveliest melody in the opera—Gay's words set to an air of Purcell's from one of his operas—and would have been perfectly adapted to Miss Mildmay's delightful soprano. Without it, the *Beggar's Opera*, to me, is lamentably incomplete. Other songs this set lacks might, I think, have been included, and some it has might have been rejected in their favor. Any *Beggar's Opera*, I suppose, is better than none. Yet

Record Collector's Corner

ONE of the earliest releases of the International Record Collectors' Club coupled two of the 1905 Fonotipia recordings of the celebrated baritone Victor Maurel. The Club has always been hoping that someday, somewhere, copies of this singer's almost legendary Gramophone and Telephone Co. records, made in Paris some three years earlier than the Fonotipia records, would come to light. Hence, it was most gratifying to receive word recently from an Australian member of the Club that he had discovered an original Maurel record — a G. and T. pressing of *Cassio's Dream* from *Otello*. A re-recording of this was made in Australia and forwarded to the I. R. C. C.

Michael Redgrave's voice and style are not well suited to the part of Captain Macheath. On the other hand, Audrey Mildmay (as delightful here as in the great *Nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* sets) and most of the other singers are excellent, save sometimes in diction.

Mr. Schonberg is a little inaccurate when he says that "the present version is that used in the famous 1920 presentation" at Hammersmith. It would be fairer to say that it is based on that version. The dull measures that precede the lively lilt of the overture proper were not heard at Hammersmith, nor were four songs included in this album. And ten songs sung in the Hammersmith presentation are not included in these records.

One last word of complaint from a listener who is glad of what *Beggar's Opera* he can get, however far short of perfection it comes: The learned leaflet supplied with this album is ridiculous. Any purchaser who wanted to read up on the historical background of the work could go to an encyclopedia or book of musical reference, or, indeed, to Mr. Schonberg's article. What was needed was a leaflet giving a brief outline of the plot, with the words of the songs. Unless one is able to follow the words one may be at a loss because of the indifferent diction of some of the singers.

Very truly yours,

Henry Bennett

Washington, D.C., June 15, 1941.

To the Editor:

As I am interested in good vocal recordings, lieder as well as opera, I have always lamented the fact

that the record companies have not always seen fit to give the buyer a booklet with words of songs and opera arias. In Victor's recent release of *The Beggar's Opera*, not only were the words of the songs not given but the story or plot of the opera was omitted. And in that excellent album of Brahms' songs by Lotte Lehmann, issued by Columbia, translations of the songs were also missing.

It seems to me that Columbia's latest policy of printing notes on the inside cover of its albums is not a good one. Some people, like myself, I am sure, do not find it advantageous to keep small albums, in which the records can warp more easily than in large ones, and when we get rid of an album with notes under the cover we naturally lose the annotations on the work. I file all my records in large albums, composers A to Z, and have a card file telling exactly where to lay my hand on any disc. I find that by putting records in 12-pocket albums instead of keeping them in the smaller ones that I save considerable space on my shelves, and furthermore my collection is bound in a uniform manner like a good collection of books. Victor seems to have originated the best idea yet on booklets with the gummed edge on the back so that one can paste it anywhere one wishes on an album leaf or an album cover. Maybe some other readers have some ideas about these matters. Even if one does keep the original album it seems to me it's easier to read notes printed in pamphlet form than to read them in an album cover. But maybe I'm just clumsy.

Yours very truly,

M. E. Matthews

Forest Hills, N. Y.

Record Notes and Reviews

It is the purpose of this department to review monthly all worthwhile recordings. If at any time we happen to omit a record in which the reader is particularly interested, we shall be glad to give our opinion of the recording on written request. Correspondents are requested to enclose self-addressed stamped envelopes.

Orchestra

ALFVEN: *Midsummer Vigil*, *A Swedish Rhapsody* (3 sides); and *Elegy from Gustav Adolf II Suite* (1 side); played by Swedish Concert Association Orchestra, direction of Nils Grevillius. Victor set M-788, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ Hugo Alfven, born in Stockholm in 1872, is regarded in his own country as one of its foremost living composers. He wrote the ingratiatingly melodic work, *Midsummer Vigil*, in 1908. The festival that inspired its composition is variously known as St. John's Eve or Midsummer

Eve or Vigil. It occurs the night before the festival of St. John the Baptist, which takes place on June 24, and is celebrated—or rather has been—throughout a number of European countries for centuries. It is said to be still observed in parts of Scandinavia. St. John's Eve is referred to in song and story; Hans Sachs speaks of it with considerable tenderness in *Die Meistersinger*. Generally the festivities include the lighting of fires throughout the streets and market places of towns; sometimes they are blessed by the parish priest, and prayer and praise is offered until the fires burn out. As a rule, however, the

celebrations were secular in character and were usually conducted by the laity.

This work has long been one of Alfvén's most popular, and well it might be, because it employs delightful melodies taken from Swedish folk songs and folk dance tunes. Inevitably the melodic lyricism of the Scandinavian peninsula recalls the music of Grieg, but here one senses a greater expansiveness than we encounter in Grieg; and Alfvén's melodic elaboration and his scoring are quite as individual as they are effective.

There are those who approach music as frankly melodic and as full of simple sentiment as this in a patronizing manner. This is a mistake; the charm of simple lyricism is not to be scorned. What Dvorak, Smetana and Grieg have accomplished with folk tunes of their own countries, Alfvén does here. And although it may be honestly said that, despite its use of Swedish melodies, this music stems from the German romanticism of the latter part of the 19th century, this does not necessarily mean that this score is outdated today. Alfvén has a fine feeling for lyrical grace, for sensitive romantic beauty, and for elation. As the annotator points out, his music is warmly and vibrantly scored. Harmonically it is conventional, to ears attuned to modern music, but so too is much of the music of Dvorak and Smetana which is admired today.

The *Elegy* too is finely written — full of a wistful melancholy and a quiet beauty; the composer's lyrical restraint here shows an appreciation for serenity in art.

Grevillius is not new to records. He has provided the Scandinavian tenor, Bjoerling, with some splendid accompaniments in various recordings. Here, the conductor gives further evidence of his marked gifts as an orchestral leader. One could not ask for more sympathetic performances. And the recording is excellently achieved.

—P. H. R.

BACH-STOKOWSKI: *Mein Jesu! was für Seelenweh befällt dich in Gethsemane*; played by the All-American Youth Orchestra, direction of Leopold Stokowski. Columbia 10-inch disc 19004, price \$75.

▲ This is mislabelled a choral-prelude



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and the German title is incorrectly given on the label. The correct title appears above. The composition comes from a collection of 69 melodies with figured bass, which in turn were taken from Schemelli's *Musikalisches Gesangbuch*, published in 1736. It is one of about 20 melodies from this collection which are generally agreed to be by Bach.

Stokowski recorded this work once before, in the album *Program of Bach*—Victor set M-401 (disc 14582). In reviewing the Victor album, we noted the remarkable quality of the recording, its unusual linear clarity and tonal eloquence in music of such subdued character. The same clarity of line prevails here, but the tone and the playing are not quite as expressive as in the Philadelphia Orchestra performance.

Stokowski, who was originally an organist, approaches most of the music of Bach from the organist's viewpoint and his transcriptions often seek to make of the orchestra a huge organ. Here, however, he is content to write simply for the strings. This arrangement, although opposed to Bach's original intentions, nonetheless preserves the quiet beauty of the original chorale melody.

—P. H. R.

GLUCK (arr. Mottl): *Ballet Suite*; played by the Boston "Pops" Orchestra, direction of Arthur Fiedler. Victor set M-787, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ Felix Mottl (1856-1911) was a highly gifted conductor, who took part in the Bayreuth Festivals on more than one occasion and who conducted with great success in both opera and concert in his native Germany and in England. He came to New York to conduct the performances of *Parsifal* given here in the season of 1903-04. Mottl made several suites for concert use from the ballet music in the operas of Gluck and Gretry. The present suite has long been popular in the concert hall, although lately it has not been performed locally as often as some of us might like it to be. Despite the fact that some purists may feel that Mottl took liberties with Gluck's music — he freely re-worked, re-orchestrated and arranged the pieces to suit his preference — few will deny that he did a good service for

the music. Gluck wrote some of the most charming ballet music ever penned, and it would seem to me that enjoyment of it is enhanced rather than diminished by its presentation in this form.

The music here is drawn from Gluck's ballet *Don Juan*, his operas *Iphigénie en Aulide*, *Orfeo*, and *Armide*. Side one opens with the *Introduction* from *Don Juan*, then comes ballet music from the first act of *Iphigénie* — this is the *Air gai* and *Lento* which Blech conducted in an earlier recording (Victor 9278). Side two is based upon the ballet music in the second act of *Orfeo* — the *Dance of the Blessed Spirits*. Side three contains the recapitulation of this last and the charming *Musette* from *Armide*. Side four brings another *Air gai* from *Iphigénie* and a *Sicilienne* from *Armide*.

This is one of the best things Fiedler has done on records. The *Dance of the Blessed Spirits* is traversed with a proper sense of its beauty and poetry, and the more animated sections are played with appropriate verve and vigor. The recording too is most effectively contrived.

—P. H. R.

LISZT: *Les Préludes*—*Symphonic Poem No. 3*; played by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, direction of Felix Weingartner. Columbia set X-198, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ This is about the tenth recording of *Les Préludes* that has come our way. It seems strange that conductors do not turn to some of the other symphonic poems of Liszt, instead of playing this one all the time. True, it is a popular and effective score, but so too are a couple of the others. *Mazeppa* could certainly stand a new recording; and both *Tasso* and *Fest-Klänge*, which have never been recorded, deserve to make their bid for popularity. All of these tone poems are melodious, readily understandable, and dramatically telling. All have their touch of the commonplace, but perhaps this as much as their best qualities has contributed to their popularity.

Back in 1930 Mengelberg was regarded as the supreme interpreter of this score. His disciplined drive fitted this music to

perfection, but he was inclined to force his power in the loudest passages. The section, *Storms of Life*, with its rush of diminished seventh chords — which in their day must have been regarded as daring — was played with superb sweep; even some of the composer's detractors got a mild kick out of Mengelberg's brilliant effects. If the final section, *Strife and Victory*, were to be recorded today, however, as Mengelberg actually plays it in concert, I think most listeners would find it badly inflated.

There are two excellent modern recordings of *Les Préludes*, one by Meyrowitz and the Paris Philharmonic Orchestra (Columbia set M-82) and the other by Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra (Victor set M-453). The latter, from the standpoint of orchestral playing and recording, is the best set, but Meyrowitz shows an understanding for some of the subtler points of the music as well as its dramatic intensity, which lends distinction to his reading. He deserved a better orchestra.

This new performance by Weingartner is a better recording than the Meyrowitz one. It is distinguished for some fine phrasing and understanding attention to dynamics, but it is lacking in dramatic fervor. Everything is clearly articulated, no effect of dynamics is lost, yet the performance lacks fire. It would seem to be a case of not rendering fully unto Caesar that which belongs to Caesar. —P. H. R.

MOZART: *Symphony in E flat, K. 543*; played by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, direction of Sir Thomas Beecham. Columbia set M-456, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ Columbia springs a pleasant surprise this month in the release of a new Mozart recording by Beecham. Those who follow the output of English Columbia will recall that a year ago (May, 1940) a performance of this symphony made by the same orchestra under the direction of Weingartner was released in England. Few will lament the fact that the Weingartner set, despite its excellence, was not released here in preference to Beecham's. For Beecham is rightly regarded as one of the foremost conductors of Mozart now before

the public, and his recorded performances of both the *G minor* and *Jupiter* symphonies have become phonograph classics. Each month we receive letters telling us of the writers' admiration for one or the other of these recordings, and how (and often why) these performances are preferred to all others.

A replacement of the existent sets of the *E flat Symphony* has long been needed. And so, I am certain, many musical listeners will welcome its advent in so fine a performance as this. Few writers realize the full significance of the *E flat*. Many rate it below the *G minor* and the *Jupiter*, their contentions being that it is less expressive than the former and less impressive architecturally than the latter. With the second contention I should not quarrel, but with the first I should like to say I am not in agreement. Nathan Broder, who has published a number of studies on Mozart, contributed an article to the June, 1937, issue of this magazine, called *The Tragic Note in Mozart's E flat Symphony*, which I believe should be read by all who persist in the idea that this work is "untroubled in its serenity and joyousness." Perhaps there is room for more impetus, as one reviewer has stated, than Sir Thomas conveys in the first movement here, but I am not so certain that the coda of the slow movement needs any more dramatizing than is given it in Sir Thomas' reading. The tragic mood is sounded in the opening Adagio and in the second subject of the Andante con moto (the slashing motive in the violins over a syncopated accompaniment in the other strings). After the return of this latter theme it does not seem logical to me that the coda should be dramatized to the extent of nullifying the effect of that theme. The coda returns to the songful opening subject, which is extended, and the mood is not far removed from that of the opening of the movement. The minuet is charmingly played, and that irresistible little trio (which surely Stravinsky remembered when he wrote *Petrouchka*), "the wood-wind's song, with the strings just leading them on, with a moment's interlude, as we break in affectionately on a friend's thought, to encourage him to expand" (W. R. Anderson), is delightfully set forth. But it is in

the finale that Beecham makes us realize his perfection in performance; for this is one of the most difficult movements to bring off.

The recording here is good but not outstanding. It may well be that this recording, made since the war began, was accomplished under difficulties. There are instances in which the woodwinds could have been brought out better, though most of these cases are not in vital passages. Too, the surfaces here are not free of faults; there is some bad crackling in the slow movement and scratching in the minuet. But despite these blemishes I am sure that a great many listeners will derive considerable comfort from this recording.

—P. H. R.

SAINT-SAËNS: *Carnival of the Animals*; played by the Philadelphia Orchestra, direction of Leopold Stokowski. Victor set M-785, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ Just eleven years ago Stokowski's first recording of this work was released. I do not know whether this new recording has any connection with Walt Disney and the films, but it would seem to me that it might very well have. Disney might make this music live for both children and adults in a far better way than it does now. For *Carnival of the Animals* falls definitely between two stools — it is neither good entertainment for children nor good adult diversion. It is, of course, intended as musical caricature, but this sort of thing has been done much better by other composers.

Saint-Saëns had a specific purpose in mind in writing this work: it was intended as a surprise offering for the yearly Mardi-Gras concert of the cellist, Lebouc. Its subtitle, *Grand Zoological Fantasy*, suggests that he may have been visualizing some of the figures of a Mardi-Gras parade, and providing a bit of festive buffoonery. (Enter Mr. Disney?) One suspects, however, that the composer wrote this work as much for his own amusement as anything else, for except for a few private performances he would not permit the score to be heard, but kept it under lock and key. Only one section was allowed to be published during his lifetime, the

part known as *The Swan*. The ban on public performance and publication of this work was lifted by the composer's will after his death in 1922.

It would be idle to contend that this score is entirely without humor, although Saint-Saëns' musical wit — particularly his satire on pianists and his use of themes taken from other composers—seems to me more studied than spontaneous. However, the music may well evoke a smile or two.

Those who admire this score will have cause for gratitude that so fine an orchestra as the Philadelphia was selected to play this music, and also that a conductor like Stokowski, who is completely sympathetic to music of effect, was chosen to conduct it. He scores all the points of the music without exaggeration.

The work is divided into the following sections: *Introduction and Royal March of the Lion; Hens and Cocks; Mules; Tortoises; The Elephant; Kangaroos; Aquarium; Personages with Long Ears; Cuckoo in the Woods; Birds; Fossils; The Swan; Pianists; and Finale*. The recording is splendidly realized, as indeed all recordings of the Philadelphia Orchestra are.

—P. H. R.

SCHUBERT: *Five German Dances*; played by N. Y. Philharmonic-Symphony Orch., direction John Barbirolli. Victor 10-inch discs 2162-3, price \$.75 each.

▲ These are very inconsequential things. Perhaps they were written for a special occasion to earn a few pfennig for the composer. The third dance has a trio, the first and second each have two, and the fifth has not only two trios but also a coda—all of which adds up to thirteen tiny sketches. None is of much importance, for they are not characteristic of the composer's better work, and one could scarcely guess that Schubert was the creator. *No. 1* has an opening that is almost pure Haydn, and only in the first trio can be found a hint that one of the greatest melodists of all time was the composer. There is nothing original about the second dance, and its first trio is decidedly of the 18th-century school. Even the second trio, which is more personal and in a minor key, is un-

characteristic. An elegant trio is the feature of *No. 3*, while the following dance is hearty and robust. Perhaps the best of the set is the concluding number, although it is not particularly distinguished for its thematic material. It might be noted that Schubert has to his credit in the dance form some delightful *ländler* and waltzes that are much superior to the ones recorded here. At any rate, Barbirolli gives a sympathetic reading, and the recording is good.

—H. C. S.

STRAUSS, Johann: *Frühlingsstimmen Walzer (Voices of Spring)*; and *Wiener Blut Walzer*; played by the Philadelphia Orchestra, direction Eugene Ormandy. Victor disc 18060, price \$1.00.

▲ These are two of Strauss' best waltzes. Two months ago Victor re-issued *Voices of Spring* as played by Szell and the Vienna Philharmonic; comparing that considerably older version with the present one serves to illustrate the advances recording has made. As we pointed out, the older disc is still serviceable, but the recording is duller and lacking in definition when played against Ormandy's. The latter enjoys bright, sonorous recording, and the orchestral balance is much superior. It is surprising how much is lost when a record of this quality is played on inferior equipment; today it takes the best to bring out the best in records.

Both interpretations are good. That of Szell is gentle and lyric; Ormandy strives for more contrast. His is a reading with a drive and spirit that in no way interferes with the grace and sentiment of the score. In the *Wiener Blut* he makes the strings weep and sigh: sentimental, perhaps, but an interpretation that the composer probably would have relished. However, the reverse of Szell's contains the only domestic recording of the charming *Donaulieder* by the senior Strauss, conducted by Alwin (a selection that should be in every waltz collection), whereas the *Wiener Blut* has been recorded many times.

—H. C. S.

TSCHAIKOWSKY: *Marche Slave, Op. 31*; played by the Cleveland Orchestra, direction Artur Rodzinski. Columbia disc 11567-D, price \$1.00.

▲ The first recordings of the Cleveland Orchestra were magnificent reproductions of an orchestra; but Rodzinski's more recent performance of Strauss' *Heldenleben* was a recording completely disappointing, being muddy and diffuse, and hardly suggestive of Severance Hall. But this latest recording of the Cleveland Orchestra is as fine as its earlier issues of *Sheherazade*, Tschaikowsky's *Fifth*, and *Finlandia*, and perhaps even better. It is one of the most realistic pieces of orchestral recording that has come our way; and it has a percussive effect in middle of the second side which we do not remember ever having heard on records before.

Those who have already bought Fiedler's fine recording of this work should not feel any need to replace it, but those who are contemplating adding the composition to their collection will do well to hear both versions before buying. This is one of the best recordings that domestic Columbia has released as far as orchestral tone and effect are concerned. Rodzinski has a definite flair for this sort of music, and he knows well how to put a real wallop into its performance. —P. G.

TSCHAIKOWSKY: *Symphony No. 2 in C minor, Op. 17 (Little Russian)*; played by the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, direction Eugene Goossens. Victor set M-790, four discs, price \$4.50.

▲ Of all the distinguished conductors in America who have never been represented in American-made recordings Eugene Goossens stands forth as the one most deserving of the honor. To call this performance an auspicious debut is but to tell half the story. Goossens' superb music makes his performances highly enjoyable. Like Sir Thomas Beecham, to whom is due the credit of discovering Goossens' talent as a conductor, he seems always to provide a reading to which one always finds it a real pleasure to return. This may be due in part to the fact that this conductor has played for the phonograph chiefly those compositions for which he appears to have definite predilections. Goossens is among those who have given striking interpretations of Russian music on records; indeed, his performances of such

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works as Tchaikowsky's *Nutcracker Suite* and the *Prince Igor Dances* of Borodin are among the most substantial interpretations of these scores on records, and our own personal preferences.

Tchaikowsky's *Second Symphony* dates from his thirty-third year. It is a more compact score than his *Third*. Its sobriquet, *Little Russian*, given by a Russian critic, fits it perfectly, for it is the most national in character of all his symphonies. Some of the thematic material for this work was taken from Russian folk songs. Thus, the principal subject of the first movement is based upon the tune *Down by the Mother Volga*, and the main theme of the finale is taken from the Little Russian folk song, *The Crane*. Undoubtedly some of the other themes have also been influenced by popular Russian melodies. In this youthful work Tchaikowsky is not concerned with dramatizing personal emotions as he was in his last three symphonies. The mood of the whole composition is an objective one. It is a work bustling with activity and exuberance. Those who know and admire the composer for his highly subjective, emotional melodies will search in vain for such melodies here; even the dulcet second subject of the andantino is purely objective in character.

Tchaikowsky revised this symphony some half-dozen years after its first performance. An amusing story about critics is told in connection with this revision. Despite the fact that the symphony at its initial performance in 1873, under the direction of Nicholas Rubinstein, was so successful that it was repeated "by general request", Tchaikowsky was not satisfied with it. Accordingly in the winter of 1879-80, during a visit to Rome, he revised the work, giving it a completely new first movement. Later, when the revised symphony was played in St. Petersburg, under the direction of Napravnik, the critical comments were most laudatory — but not one critic noticed that the symphony had been rewritten or changed at all.

The fact that Tchaikowsky chose some folk songs of Little Russia as themes for this symphony does not necessarily mean that he had in mind the creation of a national work. As one writer has suggested, it was probably because these par-

ticular tunes had for him a personality which he desired to embody in his music, just as had the characters of Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, and Francesca, which he embodied in his symphonic poems. But, at the same time, Tchaikowsky did not refute the title given the work. To me, there is a close spiritual affinity between this symphony and Borodin's *B minor* — both are bustling and energetic, forceful and more frequently blatant than refined. It seems to me the whole work builds toward its finale, which Tchaikowsky considered the best movement and ranked among his favorite compositions. This finale presages the finale of the *Fourth Symphony*. There is a slight resemblance between the *Andantino marziale* (second movement) and the *March* in the *Nutcracker Suite*, but the former is naturally longer and more diversified.

I like this symphony better than the *Third* and I rather think it will wear better than the *Fourth*. It is more closely knit, more of a piece, and it unfolds with more spontaneity and animation. It is not so self-conscious as the later symphonies.

I cannot imagine a better performance or, at this time, a better recording.

—P. H. R.

Concerto

BACH: *Concerto No. 5 in F minor* for piano and orchestra; and MOZART: *Das Donnerwetter* (*The Thunder Storm*), K. 534; played by Edwin Fischer and his Chamber Orchestra. Victor set M-786, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ Many are the musicological problems that inhabit the seven clavier concertos by Bach. To a large extent they are arrangements of other works—works not only by Bach, but sometimes by Vivaldi and perhaps others. Spitta, Schweitzer, and the rest of the Bach scholars have written much concerning Bach's part in the development of the piano concerto, and a certain amount of hair-pulling has taken place, some maintaining that the concertos are more suited for the violin, others that the composer always was thinking in terms of the clavier. The very origins of

some of the works have not been satisfactorily determined. Two are definitely transposed arrangements of violin concertos, another two are supposed to be arrangements of lost violin concertos; one stems from the fourth Brandenburg concerto. As for the others, much has been speculated but little proved.

According to Schweitzer, the present concerto is an arrangement of a lost violin concerto in G minor. From stylistic evidences in the slow movement, others claim the composition to be a reworking of music by Vivaldi. What the notes fail to state, however, is that this slow movement is very well known as a violin or cello piece entitled *Arioso*, and that the *Arioso* forms the *Sinfonie* to *Cantata No. 156*. All of which, perhaps, makes confusion

worse confounded. And all of which we can promptly forget when the music is heard. For the concerto, wherever Bach got his inspiration, is a simple and beautiful work. The opening movement, unburdened with contrapuntal devices, owns a fine, strong theme, and is worked out in a straightforward manner. Many music lovers will immediately recognize the middle movement as the famous *Arioso*. Here the melodic line is exactly the same, although ornamented to a greater degree. Less praiseworthy is the last movement, which is rather commonplace for Bach. The second theme, beginning with a fast trill, is very suggestive of Domenico Scarlatti's technique.

It is hard to conceive of a more fortunate choice for the filler. This reviewer



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happened to see the reactions of a young lady who heard *Das Donnerwetter*; she promptly rolled her eyes aloft and squealed "But it's *darling!*" Which is a perfect adjective to describe such a naive and good-natured piece of music, a dance written for a masquerade ball. Here we have an 18th-century rococo storm, where dainty shepherds and shepherdesses, dressed in silks and ribbons, flee the Arcadian fields, while fat Cupids and a taunting Boreas hover gleefully in the clouds. —H. C. S.

MENDELSSOHN: *Capriccio brillant*, Op. 22; and LULLY (arr. Mottl): *Minuet from Temple of Peace*; played by Joanna Graudan, piano, and the Minneapolis Orchestra, dir. Dimitri Mitropoulos. Columbia set X-197, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ It would appear that the Mendelssohn is a first recording, for it is not listed in any American or foreign catalogue we have consulted. For that reason alone it is worth consideration by the record buyer, especially since the work is seldom performed in concert. This is not so good a work as the piano concerto in G minor, released last month, but it is one that will afford many pleasant moments. It is lyrical, on the whole, and an effective showpiece. The best portions are those that move along at a brisk tempo; then there is some real excitement. Little can be said of the second theme, which is empty and representative of the most conventional side of Mendelssohn.

The work was composed in 1832, in London. Structurally it resembles Chopin's better-known *Andante Spianato* and *Polo-naise*, which was composed four years later. It starts with a slow, tuneful introduction by the piano, in which the orchestra gradually joins. This leads into a fast section that forms the greater part of the composition. There is ample opportunity for the soloist to display his powers, provided that the conductor does not overstress the orchestral part. In the present set Joanna Graudan, who seems to own a big tone, is not drowned out even by the climaxes that Mitropoulos revels in — climaxes that are not exactly in keeping with the nature of the music. Graudan possesses a good technique, but, in my opinion, is not bles-

sed with an overabundance of imagination. In the beginning her approach is heavy, and there is much thumping. She ends better than she begins, however, and whizzes like a pinwheel in the exciting close. An unfortunate break mars the continuity of the middle section; but, on the credit side, the recording is much better than that of the previous Minneapolis Orchestra release. It is fuller, more resonant, and a much better representation of a symphony orchestra.

Lully's *Minuet*, which serves as a filler, is polished, stately, and gracious, but the same is true of most music of the period, and this is in no way outstanding.

—H. C. S.

Chamber Music

MOZART: *Adagio in E major*, K. 261; and BRAHMS: *Sonatenatz*; played by Ossy Renardy (violin) and Walter Robert (piano). Victor disc 18032, \$1.00.

▲ Mozart wrote the present adagio as a substitute slow movement for his lovely *Concerto in A major*, K. 219, the year following the completion of the latter work. According to Einstein it was written for the use of Brunetti, the concert-master of the Salzburg court orchestra. The mood here is one of songful sweetness but, although one may be glad to have this movement in a fine performance on records, I doubt that one would wish to substitute it at any time for the other movement.

The Brahms is a *Scherzo in C minor* from a sonata written by Schumann, Dietrich, and Brahms together in 1853, as a greeting to their "Beloved and honored friend, Joseph Joachim." Schumann wrote two of the movements, which were among his last musical efforts. Brahms was only twenty years old when he penned this scherzo. Joachim is said to have refused to permit publication of the work in its entirety because he felt the Schumann section disclosed his friend's mental illness. The Brahms scherzo, on the other hand, he seemed to admire. The music lacks the deft correlation of violin and piano that

is apparent in the composer's later sonatas, and the piano writing is somewhat on the stolid side. It is interesting to hear this youthful effort of Brahms and to compare it with his later efforts, but I doubt that many listeners will feel impelled to return often to this music.

Renardy plays both works with expressive tone and style, and Walter Rober gives him able assistance at the keyboard. Although the recording is good, one feels that a little more piano tone should have been provided. This particularly true in the Brahms, where the two instruments are partners, not soloist and accompanist.

—P. H. R.

MOZART: *Sonata in F major, K. 376*; played by Yehudi and Hephzibah Menuhin. Victor set M-791, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ Busch and Serkin gave us a fine performance of the immediate successor of this sonata (*K. 377*) a couple of years ago (Victor discs 15175/76). The leading characteristics of the piano parts of both these sonatas are outlined in the fine notes by Mr. Veinus. But although, in the present work, the piano often leads off and sets the scene for the entrance of the violin, the latter instrument is by no means a purely accompanying one, as it is in much music of the time. In the compact first movement the two instruments pursue a conversational course, and again in the finale the writing is in the manner of a dialogue. In the lovely and gracious andante it is the piano that voices most of the charming sentiment, but here the violin figuration is conceived in such a manner that it stands out, as the annotator observes, "almost as an independent voice part with a melodic line of its own".

The ease, spontaneity, and facile melodic writing of this sonata is indicative of happy youth — Mozart wrote it in Vienna, after freeing himself from the tyranny of the Archbishop of Salzburg. It is appropriate that two youthful artists of our own time show their appreciation of the music of a youth of another day. The two Menuhins give a musicianly account of the score, even though the tone of the violinist is at times a little more taut than one may like. But the playing of Hephzibah Men-

uhin is both technically proficient and tonally ingratiating. Hers is the most remarkable musicianship evidenced in this performance; she displays a skill and understanding that makes her purported retirement from the musical world a most regrettable decision. There are definite indications in the young artist's performance which lead us to believe that she could in a very short time become one of the leading women pianists before the public.



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Both the recording and surfaces of the records here are good. —P. H. R.

McBRIDE: *Quintet for Oboe and Strings*; played by Robert McBride (oboe) and the Coolidge Quartet. Victor 10-inch disc 2159, price 75c.

▲ I rather expect that Robert McBride would be the first to acknowledge that this clever little work was designed as music of entertainment, although its inspiration was undoubtedly the oboe. McBride is a most versatile young musician: as early as his tenth year (1921) he started playing the clarinet, the oboe, the saxophone, and also the piano. He performed in school bands, in local theatre orchestras, and in jazz bands. As in a great deal of his music, the influence of jazz prevails in the present work, which opens in a mildly humorous vein, then takes a sentimental turn, and ends in much the same facetious manner in which it began. This is one type of American music—music typical of a group of writers who seem to favor the minimum amount of thematic development and repetition. The composer gives a good account of the oboe part but the Coolidge Quartet, although technically competent, hardly makes the most of the jazz elements. The recording is good. —P. G.

SCHUMANN: *Quartet in A minor, Op. 41, No. 1*; played by the Roth Quartet. Columbia set M-454, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ This is, at present, the only version of this quartet that can be obtained anywhere. The Flonzaley and Capet sets have been withdrawn (Schumann doesn't sell well), and now very little of the composer's chamber music graces the catalogues. To this reviewer, the relative unpopularity of Schumann is a great mystery. There are themes in his work that are as melodious as those of any of the other Romantics, there is at all times a rich and engaging harmonic background, and there is a warmth and imagination to most of the music that have no parallel even among the figures of his generation.

The present work is no exception. Musicians may point out structural short-

comings, but those are secondary in view of the prevailing beauty of the score. Like several of the symphonies, it opens with an extended introduction, marked, in this case, *andante espressivo*. The opening here is strongly suggestive of the opening measures of Sibelius' *Voces Intimae*. An *allegro* section follows the introduction, and we are introduced to one of the composer's most gracious and lyrical themes. There are certain deficiencies in the working out of the material, true, but the warmth of the melodic material more than compensates. The second movement, a scherzo, starts out like a Mendelssohn scherzo (the quartet, incidentally, was dedicated to that composer), but Mendelssohn never would have conceived the harmonic quirks and bold modulations that Schumann uses. A flowing, long-phrased melody features the *adagio*, and the finale, *presto*, is a spirited outburst.

This quartet always has been one of my favorites, but the present interpretation falls far short of one's ideal. For that reason the set cannot be recommended unreservedly. The Roths are uninteresting dynamically, their playing is coarse at times, and there appears to be little insight into Schumann's style. The tenderness and romanticism of the music are absent; only in the faster sections does the ensemble achieve any measure of success. They display a nice attack in the scherzo, and manage to achieve the spirit of the fast and more objective finale. But that is not enough.

The balance is good, but the recording is overloaded, and in fortissimo sections one could easily imagine the presence of a string orchestra. Naturally, this is no aid toward preserving the intimacy of a string quartet. —H. C. S.

Keyboard

BACH: *Tocatta and Fugue in D minor*; played by E. Power Biggs, on the Baroque organ in the Germanic Museum, Harvard University. Victor disc 18058, price \$1.00.

▲ This disc seems to me in all respects the best that Mr. Biggs and Victor have

given us. The organist's grasp of the music appears to be surer here than in the more profound and subtle chorale preludes, and he has been satisfactorily recorded. The echo, to which I have objected in other Biggs performances, has not been eliminated, but it seems to be less prominent. Perhaps the stronger lines of this music are less affected by it than are other works which he has recorded.

The popularity of the *D minor Toccata and Fugue* — which today seems to rival that of even the celebrated *Air for G string* (improperly so-called) — may be, as some claim, a result of Stokowski's brilliant orchestration of it. If this is so I am afraid that the present performance will prove disappointing to more than a few listeners. For here is none of the overpowering bigness, the tonal splendor, or the magnificently drawn-out phrases in which the noted conductor revels. Mr. Biggs, playing a Baroque organ, has limited

himself to effects which were possible to Bach himself, and has indulged in no speculations as to what Bach would have done if only he had the modern orchestra, or the modern organ, to work with. He has, therefore, built no such climax in the fugue as many of us are used to expect there, nor has he shown imaginative variety in registration. All of the same remarks apply, of course, with equal truth to the Musicraft recording of Carl Weinrich playing this work on the "Praetorius" organ at Princeton. Mr. Weinrich has been accused of undue severity in his playing of this and some other Bach works: perhaps in his anxiety to counteract the Stokowski influence he has allowed himself to be a bit extreme. In any case I think the average layman will prefer the softer lines of the Biggs performance, whatever the stylistic purist may think. The recording is in both cases excellent.

—P. M.

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BARTOK: *Excerpts from Mikrokosmos* (Vol. 1); played by Bela Bartok, piano. Columbia set M-455, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ *Mikrokosmos* is a six-volume collection of 153 short piano pieces that Bartok composed for piano students. They are graded in difficulty, ranging from elementary studies to sketches demanding real finesse. Those in the present set are mostly of the latter variety and, with the exception of two, are taken from Books 4, 5, and 6.

I am told by teachers that students seem to enjoy playing the studies. Certainly they are valuable as a foundation for rhythm, and far superior to the usual run of piano methods. Posing all kinds of technical problems, they are not so advanced that only a superior student can cope with them, and they instill into the young pianist a knowledge of certain dissonant effects that will help him to find his bearings in modern music. But valuable as *Mikrokosmos* may be to students, and interesting as they are to play, they do not always make for good listening. The fascination that they have for those acquainted with piano technique may merely bring a yawn to the less learned listener, who probably will find a good number of the selections dry and uninteresting. Indeed, it would be idle to claim that inspiration played a great part in their creation; Bartok undoubtedly was first concerned with the needs of his pupils.

Each piece has a title, but some may not mean much to the listener. *Alternating Thirds*, *Bagpipe*, and *Dance in Bulgarian Rhythm* are clear enough, but *From the Diary of a Fly*, *From the Island of Bali*, and *Wrestling* do not have such an obvious connection with the music. The most appealing things in the album are the dances: No. 128 and No. 151 especially are enjoyable.

There is some crackling on the fourth side, but otherwise the surfaces are smooth, and the recording is generally good.

—H. C. S.

RUBINSTEIN, Beryl: *Suite for Two Pianos*; played by Beryl Rubinstein and Arthur Loesser. Victor set M-784, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ Mr. Rubinstein, feeling that the need for more two-piano works is imperative, has set out to remedy it. The result is this suite, composed from February to April, 1939. It is composed of four sections — *Prelude*, *Canzonnetta*, *Jig*, and *Masks*. In the notes to the set the composer writes that all are in modified rondo form except the *Canzonnetta*, which is in an extended song form.

So much for the technical aspects. The music itself is rather innocuous; few people will be displeased with it, but fewer, I imagine, will experience great great joy when hearing it. A running, slightly jazy figure, bisected by a more lyric theme that owns a folk flavor, forms the *Prelude*. Here, as in the rest of the suite, there is a polite use of dissonance. The *Canzonnetta* is quiet, flowing, and conventional. As regards the *Jig*, Mr. Rubinstein, in the notes, comes through with the musicological contribution that Irish tunes are definitely Irish. *Masks* is interesting chiefly for its rhythmic flow, though the middle contains a real "blues" theme. On the whole it can be said that writing and treatment are skillful, but without too much harmonic or melodic invention. To this reviewer the best thing about the set is the performance, which serves to strengthen the impression that Rubinstein and Loesser are one of the best two-piano teams before the public. They have been vouchsafed good recording.

—H. C. S.

WEBER - TAUSIG: *Invitation to the Dance*; played by Benno Moiseivitch, piano. Victor disc 18050, price \$1.00.

▲ This is scarcely the piece that Weber composed, and its only excuse for being is the technical one. Weber was extremely popular in Liszt's day, and his works were constantly being "edited" or arranged. It was a day when the resources of the piano were being thoroughly explored, and, the *Invitation* being less pianistic than it might be, pianists saw no harm in touching it up a bit. Tausig, one of the supreme virtuosi of all time, followed his master Liszt in arrangements of this kind. He composed a brilliant opening to follow the initial statement of the theme, bedecked the passages with all kinds of filigree, and

added two or three cadenzas. Some of the additions are very clever and very difficult. Moiseivitch does not play the complete version, and adds a flourish of his own toward the end. He plays brilliantly, displaying a technique that not many pianists can match. The absolute ease and fluidity, the independence of his left hand, and the bravura shown in certain octave passages will recommend this disc to all responsive to pianism for its own sake. I can trace no previous recording of the Tausig arrangement; Cortot (whose version is now out of the catalogue) and Friedman have recorded the original. Incidentally, why is the piece usually labelled, as it is here, *Invitation to the Waltz*? Its title is *Aufforderung zum Tanz*, Op. 65 — *Invitation to the Dance*. —H. C. S.

Voice

ART SONGS, VOL II: *Sky One* (Clarke); *The Pasture* (Naginski); *Velvet Shoes* (Thompson) (disc 2157); *Zigeunermelodien*: No. 1, *Mein Lied ertönt*; No. 6, *In dem weiten breiten luft'gen Leinenkleide*; No. 7, *Darf des Falken Schwinge* (Dvorak) (disc 2158); *Infidélité* (Hahn); *Mandoline* (Dupont); *Le Manoir de Rosamonde* (Duparc); *Dans la Forêt du Charme* (Chausson) (disc 18052); *Automne* (Fauré); *Voici que le Printemps* (Debussy); *La Paon* (Ravel) (disc 18053); sung by Povla Frijsh, soprano, with piano accompaniment by Celius Dougherty. Victor set M-789, price \$4.00.

▲ Mme. Frijsh's second Victor album sustains her unique reputation as a builder of interesting programs. Most of the material here presented will be new to many listeners, yet there is hardly one song among the thirteen that is not in its own individual way a masterpiece. And there is not one that, in the performance, does not stand out as something quite different from anything else in the set. Any lover of fine songs, no matter what his preferences, is sure to find something treasurable here: he is more than likely to find every piece irresistible.

Strangely enough, although among the French songs several are unquestionably

great, it is the English group to which I find myself returning with particular fascination. These three songs are so haunting that once heard they cannot be forgotten. The almost religious hush of Randall Thompson's *Velvet Shoes* (with its reminders of the second *Brandenburg Concerto*) is unlike any other musical experience I have had. Here, as also in Rebecca Clarke's *Sky One*, we find a rare and profoundly touching simplicity. The suggestive accents of *The Pasture* by Charles Naginski (a composer of real promise who was drowned a year ago) made it a hit on Mme. Frijsh's recent programs. I cannot leave these fine songs in our own tongue without calling attention to the fact that their words are the words of three well known poets — Elinor Wylie, W. B. Yeats and Robert Frost.

The three Dvorak *Gypsy Songs* have been virtually forgotten, perhaps because of the tremendous popularity of one other from the set — *Songs My Mother Taught Me*. As I listen to these strong and ex-

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hilarating lieder my only regret is that Mme. Frijsh has not recorded the entire cycle.

Among the French group it is difficult to say for which song we should be most grateful. Reynaldo Hahn's *Infidélité* is a triumph of understatement — one of the finest things this not inconsiderable song writer has given us — and has long been a favorite with Mme Frijsh's audiences. In its one previous recording (by Ninon Vallin) it somehow failed to come off, but here it has all of its sting. The Dupont *Mandoline* is another work this singer has made her own, and it will be found to stand up unashamed beside the more famous settings of the Verlaine poem by Debussy, Fauré and Hahn. *Le Manoir de Rosamonde* has long needed doing, and the Chausson song is a little gem. Surely no other singer can bring so much despair to Fauré's *Automne* or such lightness to the Debussy song. And the gentle irony of Ravel's *Peacock* (from the *Histoires Naturelles*) has been realized to the full.

As recordings these are undoubtedly the finest Mme. Frijsh has made for us. To say that she was in "good voice" would hardly be a fair statement, for this singer has a different voice for every song she sings. To her the end of singing is never pure vocalism, but expression, and that expression must of necessity vary with every mood she creates. This is by no means to say that she lacks a vocal technique, for without control of the voice full expression is not possible. But it would be unthinkable to Mme. Frijsh to sing such a song as *The Pasture* with the same tonal quality she uses in *Automne*. The secret of her great art lies in the fact that she has at her command so great a variety of tonal colors.

As usual Mme. Frijsh is assisted by Celius Dougherty, who never fails to enter into the varied moods with her. As she herself said in a recent broadcast, a song is not properly a solo with accompaniment, but a collaboration between two artists. Happily the Victor engineers have grasped this fact, and Mr. Dougherty's playing emerges from the discs in all its accustomed clarity and fullness. —P. M.

SONGS OF THE BACH FAMILY: (a) *Liebster Herr Jesu*, (b) *Zu dir, Jehova*; and (a) *Vergiss mein nicht*, (b) *Willst du dein Herz* (J. S. Bach) (disc 9162-M); (a) *Der Phoenix*, (b) *Trinklied*, (c) *Als Amor in den gold'nen Zeiten*; and (a) *Bitten*, (b) *Der Tag des Weltgerichts*, (c) *Der 93. Psalm* (C. P. E. Bach) (disc 9163-M); (a) *Jesus in Gethsemane* (C. P. E. Bach), (b) *O Jesulein süß, O Jesulein mild* (J. S. Bach); and (a) *Kein Hälmlein wächst auf Erden* (W. F. Bach), (b) *Schön ist mein Mädchen*, (c) *Dem Schöpfer* (J. C. F. Bach); sung by Ernst Wolff, baritone, accompanying himself at the piano. Columbia set M-457, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ One of the most difficult feats a singer can undertake is to play his own piano accompaniment. Inevitably, at some time there will be shortcomings either in his singing or in his piano playing. "Mr. Wolff's voice is, at best," a critic on the N. Y. *Sun* recently wrote, "a throbby parlor baritone, full of unarticulated emotion; while his piano technique is best described as 'serviceable'." These facts are evidenced here. One does not question the sincerity of the singer or his enthusiasm for the material he selects. There is sensitivity in his approach, a feeling for good phrasing, and an appreciation for clear diction. But the limitations of his vocal equipment include inability to round his upper tones, to adhere to pitch consistently and to convey satisfactorily the emotion that he undoubtedly feels. I, for one, would like to hear Mr. Wolff sing a group of songs to the accompaniment of someone else. I feel certain he would do himself greater justice.

One cannot but applaud the idea behind this album, and wonder why it is that none of our more gifted singers have not thought of a similar contribution. Most of these songs are illustrative of the devotional side of the Bach family, for most are settings of religious texts. J. S. Bach's *Geistliche Lieder und Arien* is a collection of vocal works culled from Schemelli's *Gesangbuch* and the *Notebook* of Anna Magdalena Bach. Most of the J. S. Bach selections are drawn from this collection. *Willst du dein Herz* is ascribed to Bach, but its authenticity is not certain. The first

three work on disc 9162-M are among the most moving of Bach's lieder. *Liebster Herr Jesu* is a psalm beseeching peace of soul from the Saviour. *Vergiss mein nicht, mein aller Liebster Gott!* is a religious aria — an appeal to God to hearken to the pleas of his earthly child.

Carl Philip Emanuel Bach published some 180 sacred lieder as well as secular songs. The three songs on the A side of disc 9163-M are secular ones, while those on side B are sacred. The devotional aspect of this composer is closely attuned to that of his father. *Der Tag des Weltgerichts* has fine dramatic strength and *Jesus in Gethsemane* (disc 9164-M) is deeply moving. Both of these are well sung, but one suspects the singer would have realized more of the *innigkeit* had he not played his own accompaniment. As a matter of fact he seems to have found it necessary to simplify the accompaniment of the latter composition.

The singer is at his best vocally in the songs on the B side of disc 9164-M, three lyrically charming compositions, the second of which, *Schön ist mein Mädchen*, is an aria from a secular cantata called *Die Amerikanerin*, "one of the early examples of dramatic works against the background of America". The lied by Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, *Kein Halmlein wächst auf Erden*, expresses a sentiment which many in our modern world would do well to ponder over—"not a blade of grass on earth can grow without the sun; man, also, cannot flourish without God . . .".

The recording of this set is eminently satisfactory. Although the notes of Mr. Slonimsky are of interest, it is our opinion that most listeners would prefer to have translations of all the songs. The fact that *Zu dir, Jehova* "is included in Reimann's *Das deutsche Lied*, vol. IV, No. 86" may be a perfectly fascinating bit of factual data, but means nothing to the average listener, who still will not understand the meaning of the text.

—P. H. R.

DUPARC: *L'Invitation au Voyage*; and *La Vie Antérieure*; sung by Charles Panzéra, baritone, with piano accompaniment by Magdaleine Panzéra-Baillot. Victor disc 18051, price \$1.00.

▲ Mr. Panzéra has been not only a very

busy recorder, but one of the most assiduous of re-recorders. This disc is the third I have known of him singing these two songs, and I would be by no means surprised to learn that he had made more. The oldest of the three was made with orchestra, but in the two later versions he has preferred the piano accompaniments of Mme. Panzéra-Baillot. While not quite so prodigal of voice as he once was in these songs, the baritone has constantly improved his performances until with this disc they would seem to be definitive. Especially is this true of *L'Invitation au Voyage*. Adopting a somewhat faster tempo, he has achieved a greater smoothness of tone and a better line in his phrasing. In this song the ability to sustain a mood is quite as important as building climaxes. In this latest recording M. Panzéra has been equally skillful in both matters. *La Vie Antérieure* is a magnificently constructed song, not so well known in this country as its companion. Being also a setting of Baudelaire, it is hardly less atmospheric, although in a very different way. Its one magnificent climax is quite overwhelming. Here it may be that M. Panzéra does not succeed in making as stunning an effect as he once was able to do, but in every other respect the new recording is a marked improvement on its predecessors. The balance with the piano is better, though hardly up to Victor's current best.

—P. M.

PUCCINI: *La Bohème: Che gelida manina*; and VERDI: *Luisa Miller: Quando le sere al placido*; sung by Giuseppe Lugo, tenor, with orchestra. Victor disc 18059, price \$1.00.

▲ Mr. Lugo's first American release was considered quite a find when it was brought out several months ago. The voice is certainly an uncommonly good one, though as the singer produces it it is inclined to be rather open in quality. Tenors with comparable vocal material are pathetically few in any generation. Furthermore, Mr. Lugo is obviously not lacking in taste. On the evidence of the two discs now available here, he is inclined to make full use of the power that is his, and there is little in his projection of the four arias

which could by any stretch be called subtle. But on the other hand there is a merciful lack of that forced emotionalism which so many tenors consider essential to the interpretation of such music as this. From a purely mechanical point of view this is quite possibly the best recording of the *Bobéme* aria, though the voice has less appeal (to me at least) than that of Jussi Bjoerling, whose disc is a good second. The *Luisa Miller* air is almost a novelty, as the domestic catalogues have not listed it for some time. The opera dates from 1849 — before the great period which produced *Trovatore*, *Rigoletto* and *Traviata*—and it is sufficiently old-fashioned in style to suggest Donizetti or Rossini. It is the kind of music which must be done well if we are to hear it at all, but which is very enjoyable at its best. Lugo presents it honestly and smoothly. The older recordings of Schipa and Pertile (I have not heard either) may have had more stylistic polish, but this one will do very nicely. The recording is good. —P. M.

THOMAS: *Mignon: Gavotte—Me voici dans son boudoir*; and BIZET: *Carmen: Chanson Bobéme*; sung by Bruna Castagna, contralto, with Victor Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Wilfred Pelletier. Victor 10-inch disc 2161, price \$.75.

▲ Miss Castagna evidently favors French music — which is hardly surprising when we consider that two of the chief glories of the contralto's repertoire (*Dalila* and *Carmen*) were created by Frenchmen. *Carmen*, indeed, is the opera with which this singer's name has been most closely associated, and she undoubtedly ranks as one of the leading exponents of the title role before the public today. Just why her *Chanson Bobéme* fails to take fire is not easy to explain, for she is in good voice, and certainly better recorded than in her earlier Victor recording of the *Seguidilla* and *Card Scene*. For all that I am not sure that hers is not the best single electrical recording of *Carmen's* dance song. As Frederick in *Mignon* the singer seems less happily cast — perhaps the shortcomings of her singing of the *Gavotte* can be summed up in the one word piquancy. This

music is dangerously slight and stands in need of the most delicately French performance. Miss Castagna gives it everything but that. —P. M.

COBIAN: *Nostalgie*; and OTEO: *Dime que si*; sung by Carlos Ramirez, baritone, with Victor Concert Orchestra, Harold Levey, conductor. Victor disc 13595, price \$1.00.

▲ These two waltzes find Mr. Ramirez more at home than he was in his recent recording of the *Barbiere di Siviglia* aria. The music, for all its sure-fire popular appeal, will surely find no listener willing to call it important. The songs are very much like many others of their type. But they are not likely to be more satisfactorily sung by anyone than they are by Mr. Ramirez. The voice is rich and free, and the recording could hardly be better. —P. M.

Other Recordings

ALFORD: *The Two Dons*; and *The Smithy—Pastoral Fantasy*; played by the Band of H. M. Royal Marines, Plymouth Division, dir. Alford. Victor 10-inch disc 27429, price \$.50.

COOK: *Down de Lovers' Lane*; and TERRY (arr.): *Shenandoah*; sung by Paul Robeson. Victor 10-inch disc 27430, price \$.50.

RITTER: *Gypsy Wine*; and *Polka in the Minor*; played by Barnabas von Geczy and his Orchestra. Victor 10-inch disc 27431, price \$.50.

CURZON: *March of the Bowmen*; and WIDOR: *Serenade*; played by London Palladium Orch., dir. Clifford Greenwood. Victor disc 36397, price \$.75.

WOOD: *Homage March*; and *Joyousness*; played by Light Symphony Orch., dir. Haydn Wood. Victor disc 36398, price \$.75.

Columbia Add-a-Part Records

RAVEL: *Quartet in F*. First violin missing. Set S-51, five discs, price \$8.00.

SAINT-SAENS: *The Swan*; and FAURE: *Après un Rêve*. For cello or bassoon, 10-inch disc 45122, price \$1.00. For viola, disc 45123. For horn in F, disc 45124.

All played by members of the Rothschild Ensemble.

Editorial Notes

(Continued from page 389)

London puts it: "Of course books help many to keep one's mind on other things, but music is doing a better job for those who appreciate its finer qualities. In this war one is constantly listening, for bombers and shells are heard and not seen; hence when music is played one finds the mind distracted from concentrated listening for ominous sounds in the sky. The theatre and the cinema help to remove some distraction, but even there one always has an ear cocked for sounds from far overhead. It is with a sigh of gratitude that one turns on the radio and hears the strains of some fine musical work; and what the gramophone and records are doing toward steadying the nerves of its listeners can never be underestimated."

* * *

Last month an unfortunate transposition of type on page 361 destroyed the continuity of the *Record Collector's Corner* and the end of d'Esterre's article. It would be difficult for us to ascertain how many copies were sent out with this transposition. Apparently the accident happened midway in printing. For those who save their copies of the magazine, we have reprinted the right-hand column of page 361. We will be glad to forward this to any reader who wishes to paste it into his June copy. The correct reading of the transposed lines can be realized in the following manner: Count down 14 lines in the outer column of the page, make a line, and mark this section 4; now count down 19 lines and mark this section 3; the next five lines should be marked 1 — they form the tail-end of the d'Esterre article. Now number the section under the heading *Re-*

cord Collector's Corner, 2, and read the sections in numerical order. We beg to inform those readers who thought we are going in for puzzles that such is not the case; transpositions in type are not uncommon, but usually they are confined only to a line or two, and are easily located.

In the Popular Vein

Horace Van Norman

AAAA—*Blues*. Artie Shaw and his Orchestra. Victor 27411.

• This is the *Blues* movement from William Grant Still's *Lenox Avenue Suite*. Still has always seemed to us to be about the top man among contemporary American composers. He may not attempt to scale the heights like Roy Harris, or indulge in the cacophonies of a Cowell or Copland, but he says what he has to say more tellingly and effectively than any of his more highly-routed contemporaries. The fact that he is a Negro may be one reason why he is underrated, but his work has a sincerity and directness that are rareties indeed. This blues movement (written originally for full orchestra, of course) is here played more or less as written, and it turns out to be a deeply moving performance. Whatever one may think of the flamboyant publicity that surrounds Shaw, a record like this one is eloquent testimony to the fact that he is an artist of the first water and one whose artistry will undoubtedly continue to grow as long as he remains in the field. Shaw's own clarinet work is supremely effective, as always, and the work by the entire band is deeply felt and realized.

AAAA—*An American in Paris*; and *Anvil Chorus*. Mitty Malneck and his Orchestra. Columbia 36140.

• This is an extremely witty and effective condensation of *An American in Paris* (our favorite Gershwin work). There is no attempt to maintain a rigid tempo, as is usually the case with Malneck, and this is fortunate indeed. The flavor of the work has miraculously been preserved by this smallish combination—without the help of taxi horns either. *Anvil Chorus* is a jovial piece of kidding at the expense of this chestnut, but then the work always had to take a lot of kidding. So our only reaction to the present job, swell as it is, can merely be: So what?

AAA—*The Things I Love*; and *Once and for All*. Jimmy Dorsey and his Orchestra. Decca 3737.

• It appears that the only equipment necessary to become a writer of hit songs these days is a complete edition of the works of Tchaikowsky and a pair of scissors. Once more the boys have taken a Tchaikowsky melody, attached a banal June-Moon lyric to it, and achieved a hit. This time the

pirated tune is the comparatively obscure *Melody in E flat* for violin and orchestra. It makes an effective popular song, as does almost any of the Russian's themes. The Dorsey performance is first-rate, with chief honors naturally going to Bob Eberly, who, they say, is the most popular band vocalist in the business today. He gives it his usual heart-rending job.

AAA—*Daddy*; and *Two Hearts That Pass in the Night*. Sammy Kaye and his Orchestra. Victor 27391.

• We have never found much to admire in the swingings and swayings of Sammy Kaye, but once in a while he comes up with a novelty that is really good. *Daddy* is one of these. A rather cynical little ditty that originally appeared in one of the college shows, I think that it is given a unison-choral treatment that is just right for the rather jerky construction of the number. *Two Hearts That Pass in the Night* is another of Ernesto Lecuona's many song hits, and is given a characteristically lush, songful performance.

AAA—I *Know a Secret*; and *Everything Happens to Me*. K-y Kyser and his Orchestra. Columbia 35993.

• *I Know a Secret* is the type of novelty number that Kyser always handles to perfection. It would be difficult to imagine anyone else doing very much with it, but Kyser manages to extract the "cuteness" of the selection and present it in a way that is not only inoffensive but actually delightful. Sully Mason, as usual in numbers of this type, is the vocalist, and his Southern drawl fits nicely into the picture.

AAA—*Rockin' Chair*; and *Sometimes I'm Happy*. Mildred Bailey, with the Delta Rhythm Boys. Decca 3755.

• Here are two superb recordings by the lady who sings the blues like nobody else can. *Rockin' Chair*, of course, is more or less her exclusive property, since it has been her theme song for a decade or more. This is a welcome release, and replaces adequately the very early Victor recording (now available on Bluebird). Her performances are tremendously effective in both numbers, and the Delta Rhythm Boys provide excellent backgrounds.

AAA—*Take the "A" Train*; and *Sidewalks of New York*. Duke Ellington and his Orchestra. Victor 27380.

• *Take the "A" Train* is a perfectly gorgeous number by the individual who bears the moniker of Billy Strayhorn. If there really is such a person (which I sometimes doubt) it may be said that he writes and arranges in a manner closer to Ellington than the Duke himself. And this is about the highest praise that this commentator can bestow on anybody in the popular music field. It's a really terrific piece, and Ellington plays it with surging virtuosity. The reverse is rather unfortunate, in that there are so many other bands that do this sort of thing as well or better than the Duke.

AAA—*An Album of Instrumental Specialties*; featuring compositions by Sid Phillips. Ambrose and his Orchestra. Decca set 189, price \$2.60.

• Some of the most attractive and original dance novelties ever written were those that Sid Phillips turned out for Ambrose during the latter's heyday in London. Dating back six years or more, such numbers as *Streamline Strut*, *Hors d'Oeuvres*, *Wood and Ivory*, and *Cotton Picker's Congregation* are quite capable of holding themselves with the best of the current output. It's a fine idea of Decca's to bring them together in an album, for they represent an intelligent, musically approach that is never too prevalent in the hurly-burly music business, and which, in this particular instance, can never hope to be again duplicated by the same personnel. Other numbers include *B'Wanga*, *Tarantula*, *Champagne Cocktail*, *Embassy Stomp*, *Limehouse Blues*, and *Night Ride*.

Other Current Popular Recordings of Merit

AAA—*Down, Down, Down*; and *You Betcha My Life*. Count Basie and his Orchestra. Okeh 6221.

AAA—*Boulder Buff*; and *The Boogie Woogie Piggy*. Glenn Miller and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-11163.

AAA—*You'll Never Know*; and *Lazy Rhapsody*. Woody Herman and his Orchestra. Decca 3813.

AAA—*You Talk Too Much*; and *Merry-Go-Round*. Charlie Barnet and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-11153.

AAA—*Blue Champagne*; and *All Alone and Lonely*. Jimmy Dorsey and his Orchestra. Decca 3775.

AAA—*When the Lilacs Bloom Again*; and *Overnight*. Claude Thornhill and his Orchestra. Okeh 6202.

AAA—*Hep Cat's Love Song*; and *Ebony Silhouette*. Cab Calloway and his Orchestra. Okeh 6192.

AAA—I *Know That You Know*; and *Lower Register*. Joe Marsala and his Orchestra. Decca 3764.

AA—*Coo, Dinny, Coo*; and *Sweet Sue*. New Friends of Rhythm. Victor 27412.

AA—*Blues in My Condition*; and *Ain't Misbehavin'*. Cootie Williams and his Orchestra. Okeh 6224.

AA—*Do You Care*; and *I Touched a Star*. Raymond Scott and his Orchestra. Columbia 36161.

AA—*A Rendezvous in Rio*; and *On the Outside Looking In*. Orrin Tucker and his Orchestra. Columbia 36151.

AA—*Where You Are*; and *I Take to You*. Jan Savitt and his Top Hatters. Victor 27414.

AA—*Fool Am I*; and *Slow Down*. Gene Krupa and his Orchestra. Okeh 6154.

AA—*Tonight You Belong to Me*; and *Rifftime*. Erskine Hawkins and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-11161.

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